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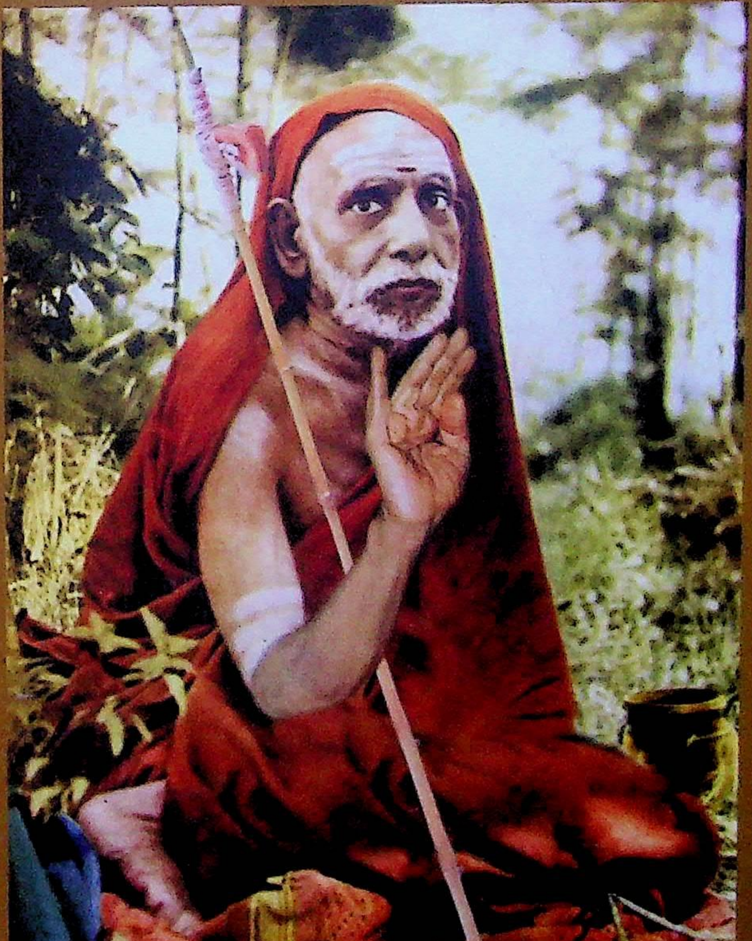

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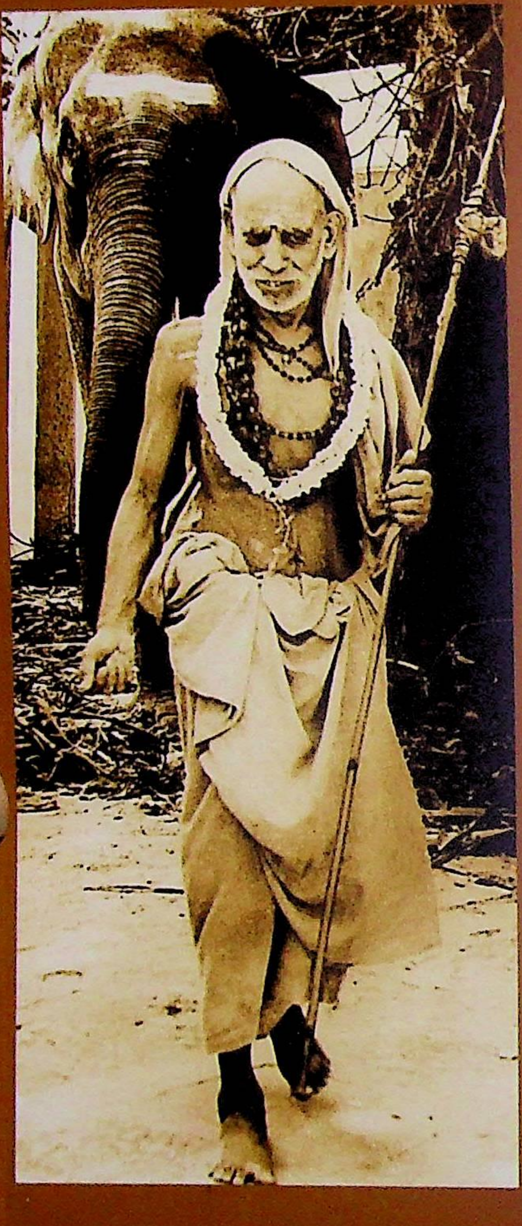

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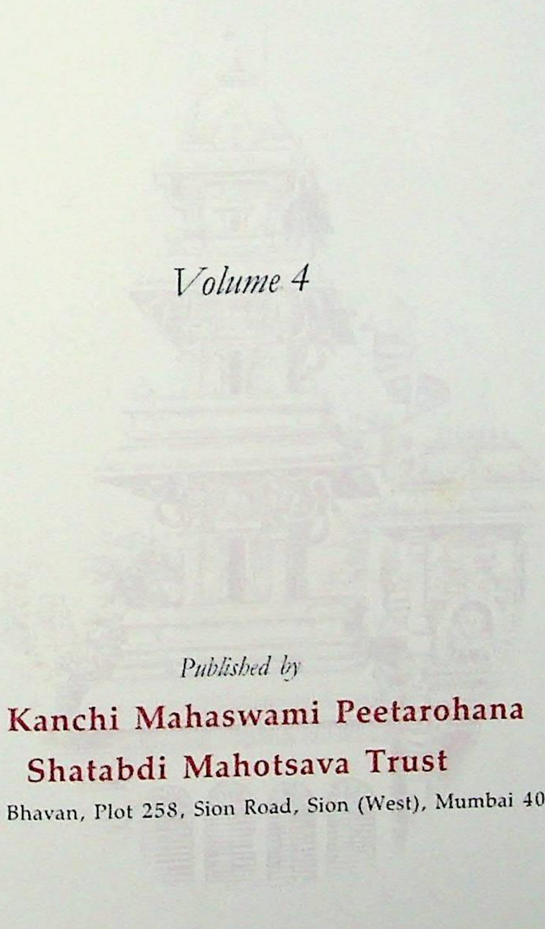

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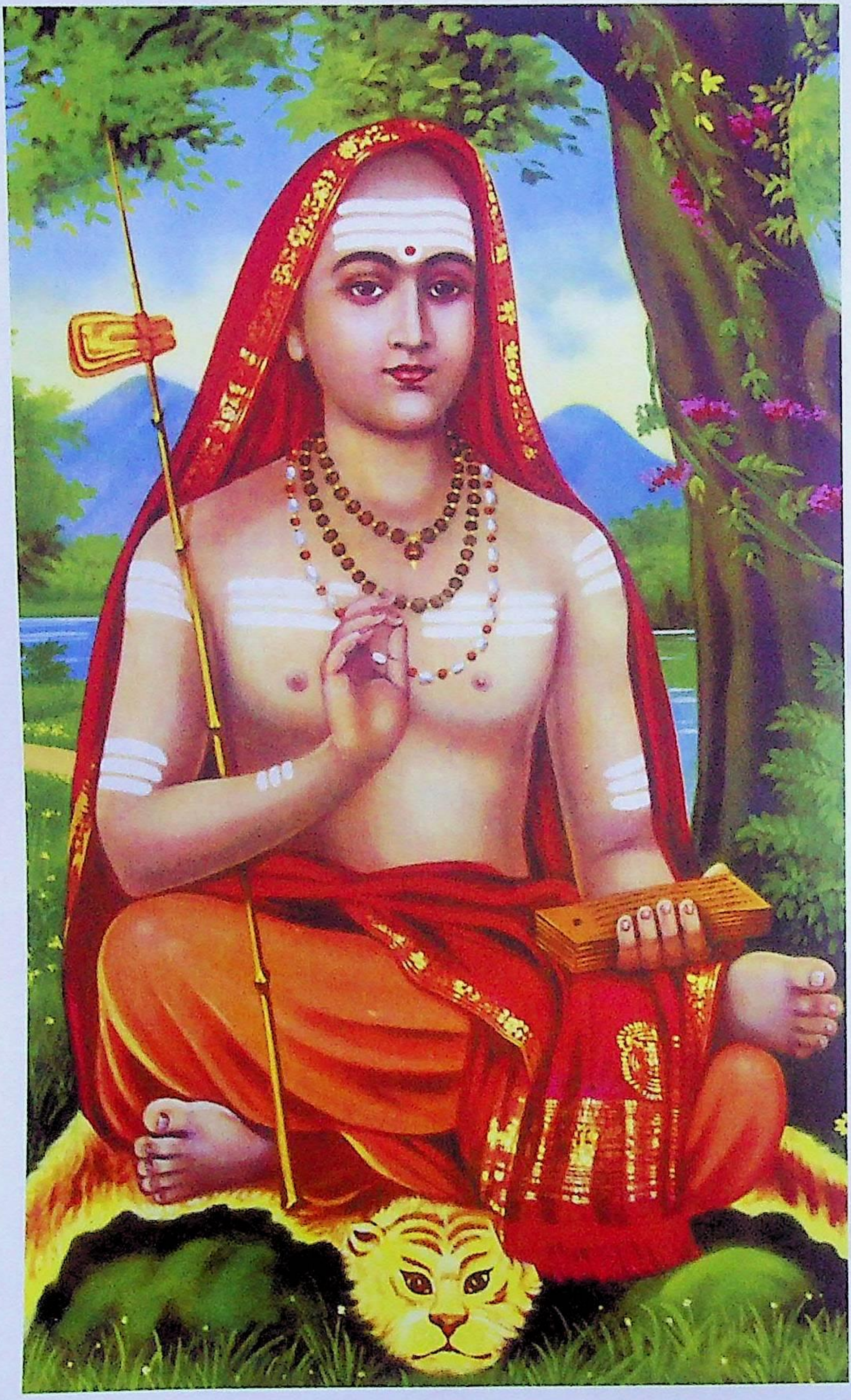

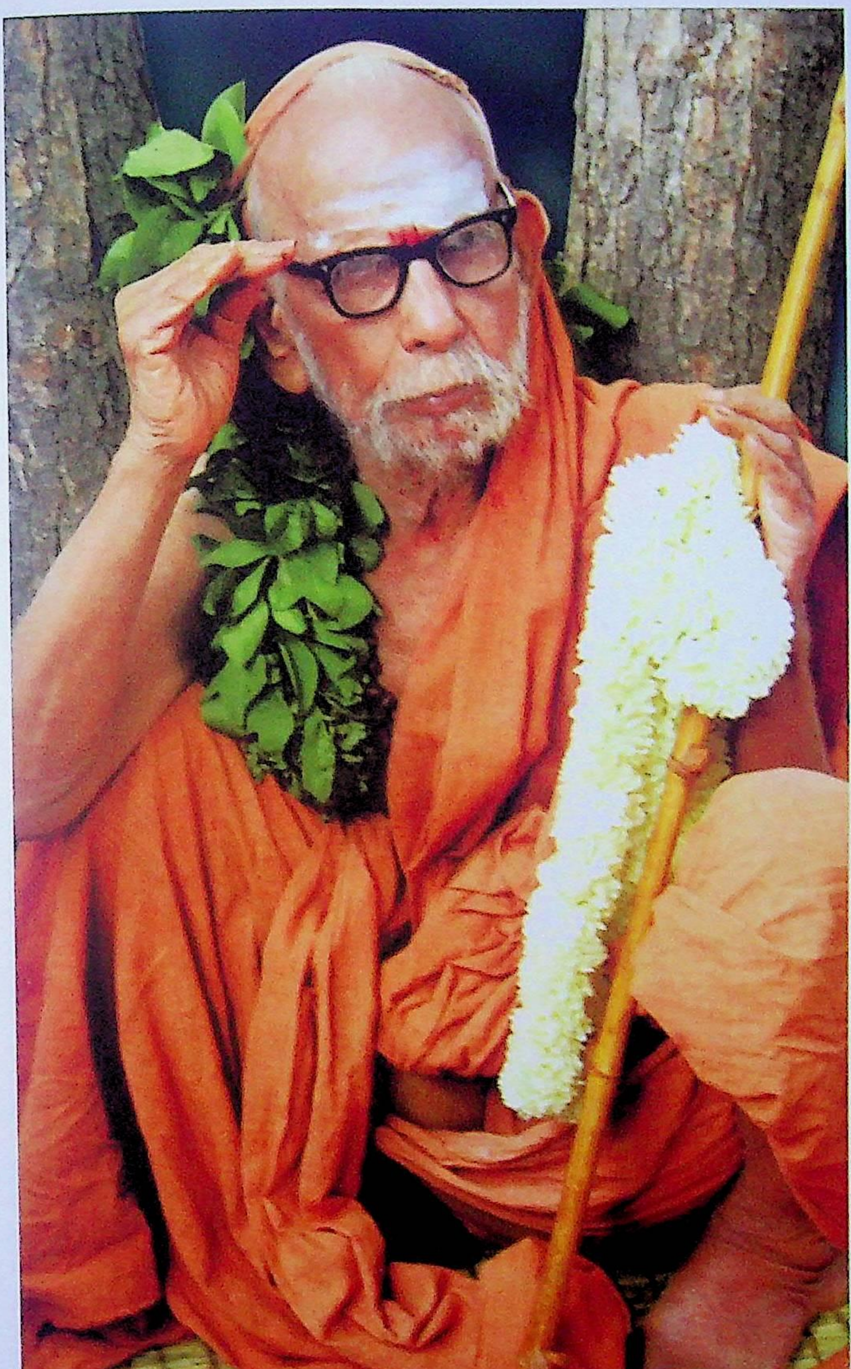

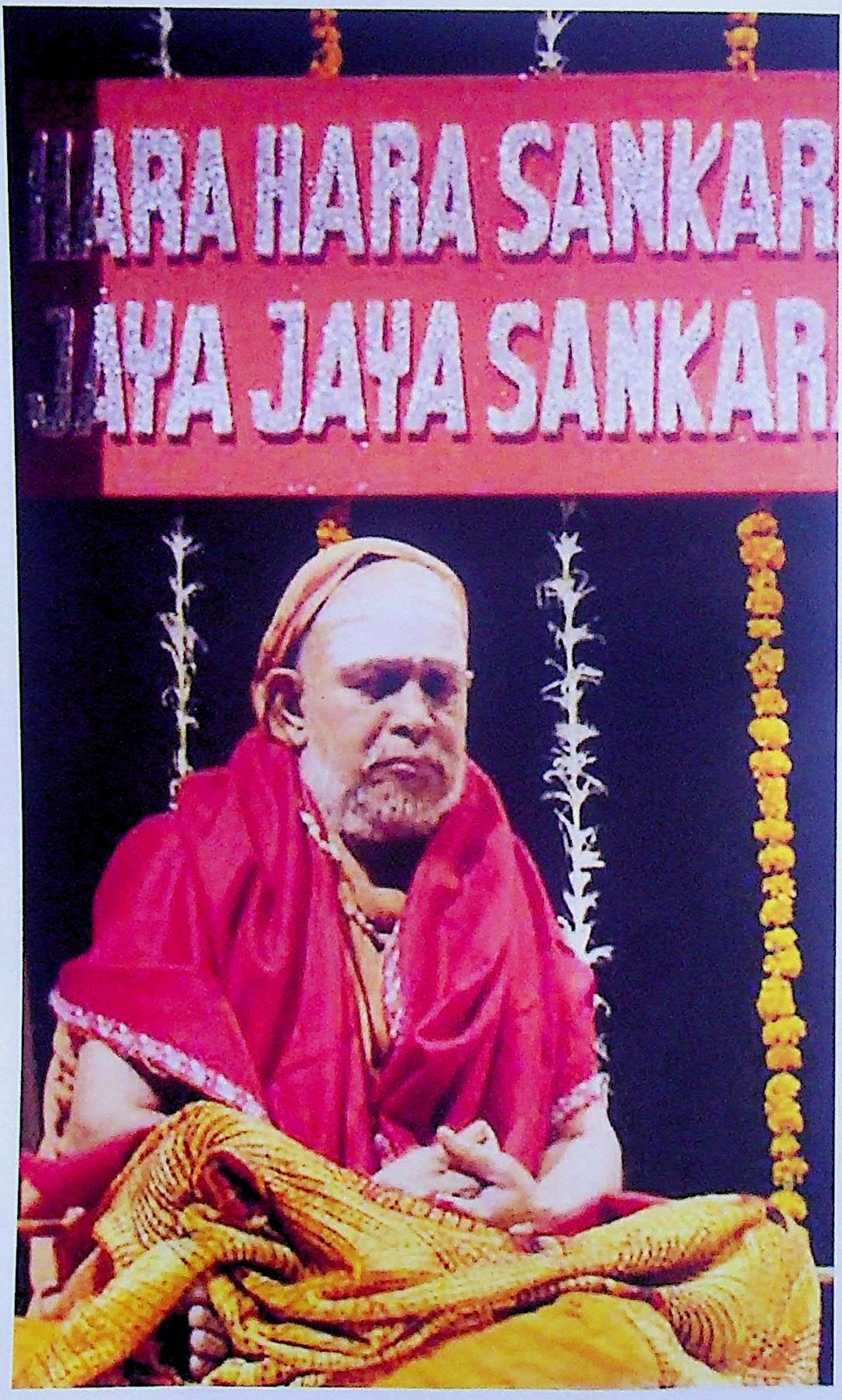
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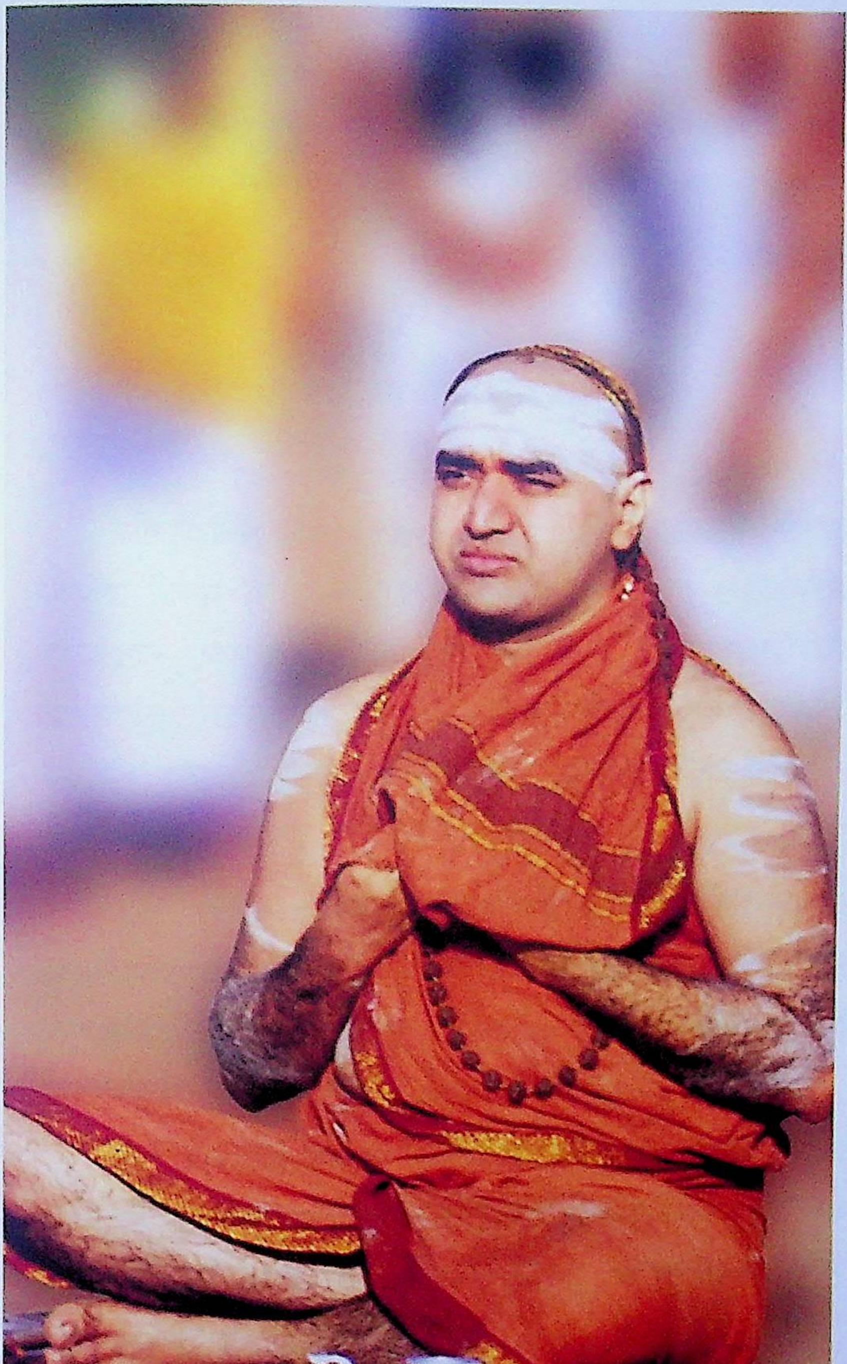

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SRI JAYENDRA SARASWATHI SWAMIJI PEETAROHANA SWARNA JAYANTI
MAHOTSAV YEAR

१३-२-२००६

॥ सनातनर्धमपरिपोषणम् ॥

कलियुगेऽस्मिन् प्राय: २५०० वर्षेभ्य: पूर्वं कैलासवासी परमेश्वर: कालट्यां शिवगुरु-आर्याम्बयो: पुत्रत्वेन अवततार । य: खलु स्वकीयोपदेशै: लोकशङ्करत्वं प्राप्य अन्वर्थतया श्रीशङ्करो बभूव । आत्मतत्त्वोपदेशै: तापपापाञ्जनान् सर्वान् जनान् त्रातुं तत्र तत्र आसेतुहिमाचलं पद्भ्यां सञ्चरन्त: कर्म-भक्ति-ज्ञानमार्गं प्रदर्शयन्त: षण्मतस्थापनां, शैव-शाक्त-कौमार-गाणपत्य-सौर-वैष्णव-पूजापद्धतिरूपां कार्यं विधाय महोपकारं कृतवन्त: ।

अत्र स्थापितस्य मतानुष्ठानस्य सर्वदाऽभिवृद्धये, सर्वजनसुखाय सर्वजनहिताय आचरणमार्गस्य अविच्छिन्नतया प्रदर्शयितुं चतसृसु दिक्षु मठान् स्थापयित्वा श्रीकाञ्च्यां स्वयम् अधिष्ठाय सर्वज्ञपीठमारुढवन्त: इति बहुप्रमाणसिद्धो वृत्तान्त: ।

तत्र श्रीकाञ्चीमठपरम्परायां शिष्य-प्रशिष्यपरम्परया महान्तो गुरव: बोधेन्द्रादय: वैदिकमतपोषणं स्वीयदेशानुष्ठानाभ्यां कुर्वन्त: अविच्छिन्नतया अद्य यावदनुवर्त्तन्ते । अत एव विद्यारण्यस्वामिभि: ''शम्भोमूर्तिश्चरतिभुवने शङ्कराचार्यरूपा ''इति वर्तमानप्रयोग: कृत: ।

परम्परायामस्यां पीठाधिपत्वेन स्वनामधन्या: अस्मद्गुरव: श्रीचन्द्रशेखरेन्द्रसरस्वतीस्वामिपादा: व्यराजन्त ।

एते "प्रत्यक्षदैवम्" इत्येवं प्रसिद्धा: अस्माकं गुरव: श्रीचन्द्रशेखरेन्द्रसरस्वतीस्वामिन: स्वीये त्रयोदशे वयसि काञ्चीकामकोटिपीठम् आरुढा: । तत: परं स्वस्य शतवत्सरपर्यन्तं पीठे स्थित्वा वेदधर्मशास्त्राचारपरिपालनाय असंख्यानि कार्याणि कृतवन्त: ।

१. तत्र तत्र वेदपाठशाला: संस्थाप्य वेदापाठशालासु छात्राणाम् अध्यापकानां च विद्यादिदानद्वारा प्रोत्साहनाय वेदरक्षणनिधिसंस्थास्थापनम् अकार्षु: ।

२. सन्ध्यानुष्टानम्, जातकर्म-नामकरणम्-अन्नप्राशन-चौलोपनयनम्-विवाहादिकर्म, तदुपयुक्तमन्त्राणां अर्थबोधनाय पूर्वोक्तकर्मसु श्रद्धोत्पादनाय "वेदधर्मपरिपालनसभां" प्रत्यस्थापयन् ।

३. स्वीयषष्ट्यब्दपूर्तिसन्दर्भे चतुर्वेद-भाष्याणां प्रचाराय वेदभाष्याध्ययन-अध्यापनाय च षष्ट्यब्दपूर्तिसंस्थां संस्थाप्य वेदभाष्यप्रचारं शास्त्रपण्डितानाम् आस्थानविदुषां च मार्गदर्शने सर्वाणि शास्त्राणि पाठयित्वा प्राचीनशास्त्रोद्धारं च अकार्षु: ।

४. भक्तिमार्गप्रसाराय तमिल्-संस्कृतस्तोत्राणि कण्ठस्थीकृतवद्भ्य: सर्वेभ्य: पारितोषिकं दत्तवन्त: ।

५. कलौ मुख्यधर्मस्य नामसंकीर्तनस्य विशेषतोऽभिवृद्धये नामलेखकानां सर्वेषां योग्यसम्माननं कृत्वा प्रोत्साहितवन्त: ।

६. सनातनवैदिकधर्मानुष्ठातृणां श्रद्धाभक्ति-विवर्धनाय ते तत्र तत्र वैदिककर्मणां, मन्त्राणां विशिष्टार्थान् प्रवचनरूपेण शास्त्रज्ञद्वारा बोधितवन्त: ।

७. और्ध्वदैहिकानुष्ठानाय अपेक्षित-स्थलाभावात् उत्पन्नक्लेशनिवर्तये ज्ञानवापीस्थलानि निर्माय सर्वेषां स्वधर्मानुष्ठानाय वहूपकृतवन्तः ।

महान्तः एते स्वपद्भ्याम् एव सम्पूर्ण भारतदेशे यात्रां च विधाय काशीयात्रां च कृत्वा बहूनि भगवत्पादस्मारकाणि दृढभवनानि तत्र तत्र स्थापितवन्तः ।

१) मण्डनमिश्र-श्रीशङ्करसंवादो जगत्प्रसिद्धः विराजते । स च प्रयोगक्षेत्रे संबृत्त इति हेतोः तस्मिन् पुण्यक्षेत्रे तत्स्मारकतया वेदवेदाङ्गवेदान्त-त्रिवेणीसंगमक्षेत्रे गंगायमुनासरस्वतिसंगमे प्रसिद्धत्रिवेणीसंगमे संगमस्नानसमनन्तरं दर्शनार्थं प्रसिद्धशंकरविमानमंडपं स्थापयामासुः ।

२. रामेश्वरक्षेत्रे समुद्रतीरे एव श्रीशङ्करमठं, मूर्तिं च प्रतिष्ठाय स्मारकचिह्नं च कृतवन्तः ।

३. श्रीकालटिक्षेत्रेऽपि भगवत्पादानां कीर्तिस्तंभं च प्रतिष्ठाप्य अनेक जनेषु गुरुस्मरणम् उत्पादितवन्तः ।

४. हम्पिनगरे चतुर्वेदभाष्यप्रणेतृणां श्रीविद्यारण्यस्वामिनाम् आवासभूमौ कांश्चन मासानुषित्वा तत्रैव विद्यमानानां शिलाशासनानां क्रोडीकरणम्, तद्विषये तत्रत्यप्राचीनसंस्कृतिविषये शोधं च कारयित्वा लोकोपकारार्थं, विद्यारण्यश्रीचरणानां विषये लोके श्रद्धाभक्त्युत्पादयितुं च सर्वान् शिलाशासनस्थविषयान् संगृह्य बहूनि पुस्तकानि मुद्रापयामासुः ।

५. काञ्चीपुर ट्रस्ट संस्थां संस्थाप्य देवपूजायाः अवश्यकर्तव्यत्वम्, प्राचीनजीर्णमन्दिरेषु पूजाकर्तुणां मासिकं वेतनं प्रदाय प्रजाद्वारा जनेषु भक्तिबीजम् उत्पादितवन्तः ।

६. भारते बहुत्र देवालयानां जीर्णतां प्राचीनतां च दृष्ट्वा स्व तपःशक्त्या तत्रत्य महिमानं ज्ञात्वा तेषां जीर्णोद्धारं पुनः प्रतिष्ठां च अकार्षुः ।

७. नवीनशास्त्रप्रभावेण प्राचीनशास्त्राणां, अध्येतॄणां च संख्या न्यूना सम्पन्नेति ज्ञात्वा विभिन्नशास्त्राणां तत्रापि विशेषतः न्यायशास्त्रस्य संरक्षणाय काञ्च्यामेव न्यायविद्यालयं स्थापयामासुः ।

८. प्रचीनशास्त्रपण्डितानां मासिकं वेतनम् अल्पमिति ज्ञात्वा मत्वा च, तद्द्वारा कुटुम्बसंरक्षणे क्लेशं दृष्ट्वा प्रतिपण्डितं न्यूनातिन्यूनम् अष्टशतं मासिकसम्भावना भवत्विति स्वकृपया गुरुवारसभापद्धतिमनुष्ठाय शास्त्रपण्डितानाम् आजीवनं संरक्षणमिदानीमपि अनुस्यूततया विधीयमानमस्ति ।

९. पण्डितानां स्वस्थले एव सम्भावनां दत्वा शिष्यान् तत्रैव सम्प्रेष्य शास्त्राध्ययनं कारितवन्तः तद्द्वारा सज्जीकृताः विद्यार्थिनः भारते बहुत्र विराजन्ते ।

१०. ''देयं दीनजनाय च वित्तम्'' इति भगवत्पादसूक्तिम् अवलम्ब्य कैङ्कर्यसभाः वह्वीः प्रतिनगरे प्रतिग्रामं च संस्थाप्य दीनानां विवाहादिषु कार्येषु अपरिमितशक्त्या धनसाहाय्यं कृतवन्तः ।

एवं बहुविधलोकोपकारकार्याणां प्रत्यक्षतया परोक्षतया वा सहकृतवतां तपोमूर्तिणां जगद्गुरूणां साक्षात् ईश्वरस्वरूपाणां महतां पीठारोहणशताब्दी आगामिनिवर्षे आगमिष्यति । तत्सन्दर्भे तत्र भवतां तेषां महतां स्मरणेन तदभीष्टानां सत्कर्मणां सर्वेषां परितः अभिवृद्धये नानाविधाः कार्यक्रमाः आयोजनीयाः इति बहुभिः भक्तैः वाच्छ्यते । तादृशमहोत्सवकार्यक्रमाः सम्यक् प्रचलन्तु इति आशास्महे । तत्र च सर्वे आस्तिकजना भागं स्वीकृत्य जन्मसाफल्यं लभन्ताम् इति च क्रियते नारायणस्मृतिः ।

श्री काञ्चीकामकोटिपीठाधिपति
जगद्गुरु श्रीजयेन्द्रसरस्वती
गुरुस्तुतिः

श्री काञ्ची कामकोटि पीठाधिपति
जगद्गुरु श्री जयेन्द्र सरस्वती श्रीपादैः कृता

अपार करुणासिन्धुं ज्ञानदं शान्तरूपिणम् ।
श्री चन्द्रशेखरगुरुं प्रणममि मुदाऽन्वहम् ॥

गुरुवारसभाद्वारा शास्त्रसंरक्षणं कृतम्
अनूराधासभाद्वारा वेदसंरक्षणं कृतम् ।
मार्गशीर्षे मासवरे स्तोत्रपाठप्रचारणम्
वेदभाष्यप्रचारर्थं रत्नोत्सवनिधिः कृतः ॥

कर्मकाण्डप्रचारार्थं वेदधर्मसभा कृता
वेदान्तार्थप्रचारार्थं विद्यारण्यनिधिः कृतः ।
शिलालेखप्रचारार्थं उट्टंकितनिधिः कृतः
गोब्राह्मणहितार्थाय वेदरक्षणगोनिधिः ॥

गोशाला पाठशाला च गुरुभिस्तत्र निर्मिते
बालिकानां विवाहार्थं कन्यादाननिधिः कृतः ।

देवार्चकानां साह्यार्थं कञ्छिमदुर निधिः कृतः
बालवृद्धातुराणां च व्यवस्था परिपालने ॥

अनाथप्रेतसंस्कारात् अश्वमेधफलं लभेत्
इति वाक्यानुसारेण व्यवस्था तत्र कल्पिता ।
यत्र श्रीभगवत्पादैः क्षेत्रपर्यटनं कृतम्
तत्र तेषां शिलाभूर्तिं प्रतिष्ठाप्य शुभं कृतम् ॥

भक्त वाञ्चाभिसिद्ध्यर्थं नामतारकलेखनम्
राजतं च रथं कृत्वा कामाक्ष्याः परिवाहणम् ।
कामाक्ष्यंबाविमानस्य स्वर्णपत्रैः समावृतः
मूलस्योत्सवकामाक्ष्याः स्वर्णवर्मपरिष्कृतिः ॥

ललितानामसाहस्र स्वर्णमाला विराजते
श्रीदेव्याः पर्वकालेषु सुवर्णरथ चालनम् ।
चिदम्बर नटेशस्य सुवैडूर्यकिरीटकम्
करेऽभयप्रदे पादे कुञ्चित रत्नभूषणम् ॥

मुष्टितण्डुलदानेन दरिद्राणां च भोजनम्
रुग्णालये भगवतः प्रसादा विनियोजनम् ।
लोकक्षेमहितार्थाय गुरुभिः बहु तत्कृतम्
स्मरन् तद्वन्दनं कुर्वन् जन्मसाफल्यमाप्नुयात् ॥

⁂

सद्गुरुदशकम्

श्री शङ्करविजयेन्द्रसरस्वती श्रीचरणैः कृतम्

श्रुतिस्मृतिपुराणोक्तधर्ममार्गरतं गुरुम्।
भक्तानां हितवक्तारं नमस्ये चित्तशुद्धये।। १ ।।

अद्वैतानन्दभरितं साधूनामुपकारिणम्।
सर्वशास्त्रविदं शान्तं नमस्ये चित्तशुद्धये।। २ ।।

कर्मभक्तिज्ञानमार्गप्रचारे बद्धकङ्कणम्।
अनुग्रहप्रदातारं नमस्ये चित्तशुद्धये।। ३ ।।

भगवत्पादपादाब्जविनिवेशितचेतसः।
श्रीचन्द्रशेखरगुरोः प्रसादो मयि जायताम्।। ४।।

क्षेत्रतीर्थकथाभिज्ञः सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहः।
चन्द्रशेखरवर्यो मे सन्निधत्तां सदा हृदि।। ५ ।।

पोषणे वेदशास्त्राणां दत्तचित्तमहर्निशम्।
क्षेत्रयात्रारतं वन्दे सद्गुरुं चन्द्रशेखरम्।। ६ ।।

वेदज्ञान् वेदभाष्यज्ञान् कर्तुं यस्य समुद्यमः।
गुरुर्यस्य महादेवः तं वन्दे चन्द्रशेखरम्।। ७।।

मणिवाचकगोदादिभक्तिवागमृतैर्भृशम्।
बालानां भगवद्भक्तिं वर्धयन्तं गुरुं भजे।। ८।।

लघूपदेशैर्नास्तिक्यभावमर्दनकोविदम्।
शिवं स्मितमुखं शान्तं प्रणतोऽस्मि जगद्गुरुम्।। ९।।

विनयेन प्रार्थयेऽहं विद्यां बोधय मे गुरो।
मार्गमन्यं न जानेऽहं भवन्तं शरणं गतः।। १०।।

* * *

INTRODUCTION

Location : Kalavai, a small town in the Vellore District of Tamil Nadu, India.

Date : February 13, 1907.

A young boy of thirteen is chosen to become the 68th Pītādhipathi of Sri Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītam, in the illustrious paramparā of Ācharyas who adorned the Pītam established by Sri Ādhi Sankarā more than 2500 years ago.

That boy is none other than His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Chandrāsēkharēndra Saraswathi Swāmigal. To millions of devotees he was simply 'Periyava' – the revered one or Maha-Periyava. 'Periyava' in Tamil means a great person. That term however has acquired a special meaning because it has come to refer to His Holiness. It is a term that at once conveys endearment, reverence and devotion. It would never be mentioned in a casual manner. Mahaswami and Pāramāchāryā are his other well-known appellations.

The Pāramāchāryā was the Pītādhipathi of the Mutt for 87 long years. During this period, Sri Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītam acquired new strength as an institution that propogated Sri Ādhi Sankarā's teachings. The devotion, fervour and intensity with which the Pāramāchāryā practised what Ādhi Sankarā had preached, is unparallelled. He lived a spartan life. Throughout his life, the main focus of his concern and activities was rejuvenating Vēdha adhyayana, the Dharma Sasthras and the age old tradition which had suffered decline. 'Vēdha rakshanam' was his very life breath and he referred to this in most of his public discourses and private conversations. His providing regular support to Vēdha Pātāsālās through the Vēdha Rakshna Nidhi Trust (which he founded), honouring Vedhic scholars, holding regular sadhas which included discussions on arts and culture - these led to a renewed interest in Vedhic religion, Dharma sasthras and Sanskrit. His long tenure as Pītāthipathi was the golden era of the Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītam.

Pāramāchāryā was a walking university. Scholars of all sects, not only from all over India but also from countries abroad came to him and deemed it a blessing and a privilege to go back enlightened after meeting him. His regular visitors ranged from the most ordinary village folk to the highest in the land. Presidents and Prime Ministers, Kings and Queens, Highnesses and Excellencies came to spend a few moments with him and seek his blessings.

That the Pāramāchāryā was an extraordinary phenomenon can be seen from this incident. When he was in his late eighties he left Kānchipuram and undertook a padha yathra through Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra. Before he returned to Kānchipuram he made all arrangements for the construction of an exquisite Nataraja temple at Satara (Uttara Chidambaram). The uniqueness about ṭhis temple is the fact that the states of Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Andhra Pradesh, Karanataka, and Maharashtra came together to build the 5 doorways to the temple. The state of Kerala supplied the entire wood required for the temple. It was only his grace and moral influence that made this possible.

The Pāramāchāryā's catholicity of outlook was extraordinary. He was the Advaitha Āċharya. He was the authentic spokesman of Hindu religion and its Dharma Shastras and of Sanathana Dharma. He even believed that it was Vedhic religion that had prevailed all over the world in ancient times. But, just as he had high regard for the Āċharyas of other philosophical doctrines like Ramanuja and Madhva and the Nayanmars of Saiva Siddhanta, he had great respect for Jesus and Mohamed Nabi, the Prophet. He could be so considerate as to express the view that those who indulged in proselytisation did so out of their conviction that their religion alone could secure redemption.

February 13, 2006 marks the beginning of the 100th year of the Pāramāchāryā's Sanyāsa Swīkarana (entering the ascetic order) and Pītārōhaňa (becoming the head of the Sri Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītam). Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Peetarohana Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust has been specially formed to celebrate this significant milestone in the spiritual history of India.

The main objective of the Trust is to spread the thoughts and the message of the Pāramāchāryā across the world, not just to his devotees, but even to others who might never have had the opportunity to have his dharsan. With this objective in view the Trust has undertaken on priority the translation into English and other major Indian languages of his discourses in Tamil (upansayam). To begin with, we have chosen 'Deivathin Kural' - Voice of God in Tamil. It is a collection of the Pārāmāchāryā's discourses starting from 1932. There are seven volumes each of about 1000 pages. His talks cover a wide range of topics apart from all aspects of Vedhic dharma and Hindu religion which is the main focus. It is a veritable encyclopedia of Hindu religion and dharma to which people refer for authentic information on these aspects.

'Deivathin Kural' is a monumental work by Sri Ra Gānapathy and it occupies a special place among many books written about Pāramāchāryā. Sri Gānapathy painstakingly collated all of Pāramāchāryā's talks, conversations, casual comments, answers to questions etc covering several aspects of our ancient religion, dharma and culture. Sri Gānapathy not only collected the material but also collated and organized under various subjects everything that the Pāramāchāryā had spoken about a subject over many years, at several places.

The purpose of the English translation is two fold. One is to reach Pāramāchāryā's thoughts and message to a wider audience. The second is to use the English translation as the basic text for translation into other Indian languages. The original in Tamil portrays in large measure the simplicity and clarity of thoughts and expressions and the unique story telling style of the Pāramāchāryā. It has been our attempt to capture it in English. As readers will know this is not an easy task. In one of his talks, while explaining the need to protect the Vēdhas in their original form, the Pāramāchāryā himself has, in his characteristic style, referred to the limitations of any translation.

The Pāramāchāryā's observations are a warning to us and we are deeply conscious of our responsibility. Effort has been made to address the average reader through this work in simple language. Since the English version is to be the base from which translation into other Indian languages will be done, suitable diacritical markings have been used for Sanskrit and Tamil words. Wherever necessary the actual Sanskrit words and Slōkās have been given with diacritical markings and the meanings are also given along with the words. This should make it more convenient for the reader than a separate glossary at the end.

It is usual to share one's good and memorable experiences with others. When two devotees of the Pāramāchāryā meet, it turns out to be an occasion for sharing of experiences. Entire train journeys could be spent talking only about him and his various qualities. He has indeed created a huge family, truly a Vasudaiva Kutumbhakam. It is the hope and wish of Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Peetarohana Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust that readers will experience the Pāramāchāryā through these pages, which in itself would be an elevating experience.

His talks do more than providing insight into Vedhic Dharma and Hindu religion. There is indeed hope that inspite of the declining moral values all around, dharma will prevail. It should also be clear that mere wishful thinking will not make that happen. All of us have a duty and responsibility towards making it happen. The many schemes which the Pāramāchāryā introduced are simple and effective. If anything, we have to revive many of his practical ideas and implement them.

The blessings of H.H. Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swāmigal and H.H. Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi Swāmigal, the 69th and 70th Ācharyas of Sri Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītam have provided encouragement to this Trust to embark on a project of this magnitude. It is their Sankalpa that the Pāramāchāryā's message should reach every Indian wherever he may be. We are overwhelmed by the responsibility they have placed on us.

Millions of the Pāramāchāryā's devotees sincerely believe that He is alive even today and He is guiding us on the path of dharma. It is His spirit that acts as the beacon in these troubled times. It is through His grace that this work is being published.

Sri Kanchi Mahaswami
Peetarohana Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust
Mumbai
February 13, 2006

* * *

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

His Holiness Sri Chandrāsēkharēndra Saraswati the 68th Acharya of Sri Kānchi Kāmākoti Pītam, was humility personified. In the words of one of his ardent devotees, he was the greatest 'mayavi' – in this that he neither revealed himself as God nor as God's voice. He has not even hinted as much.

Throughout his public discourses and private conversations he has been meticulous in his expressions. He will always trace his views to the Vēdhas, the Puranas or the Dharma shastras. It was never 'my opinion or point of view'. His focus was on truth and since it is truth that he has consistently spoken about, the Tamil volumes came to be named 'Deivathin Kural' – meaning *Voice of God.*

In the introduction we have already referred to the Herculean efforts made by Sri Ra Gānapathy to compile the seven volumes of 'Deivathin Kural' and have them published. While all of us owe our eternal gratitude to Sri Gānapathy we, in the Trust, have a special duty not just to thank him but salute him, which we do with great pleasure.

We are also grateful to Sri Thirunavukkarasu of Vanathi Publications who has published all the seven volumes of 'Deivathin Kural'. He has rendered a glorious service for the preservation of Sanathana Dharma. Vanathi Publications have also graciously permitted us to translate the original Tamil works not only in English but also in other Indian languages. We specially thank them for this. May the blessings of the Pāramāchāryā be always with them.

In his preface to the Tamil editions Sri Ganapathy has thanked Kalki and B.G. Paul & Co, a publishing house. He has also thanked several individuals making special mention of Sri Ananthānandēndra Saraswathy Swāmigal, popularly known as 'Sri Ānjanēya Swāmigal, who spent several years with the Pāramāchāryā. He was witness to several conversations and expositions of Pāramāchāryā on various topics. It was he who helped Sri Gānapathy to capture the delicate nuances on many subjects, discussed by the Pāramāchāryā. In addition, there were devotees who had assiduously taken notes from the Pāramāchāryā's conversations and speeches and gladly shared them with Sri Ganapathy but on strict conditions of anonymity. Such is their devotion and humility.

Smt. MRF from USA is one of the volunteers who came forward for taking up the translation work for Volume 4. When we requested her for her profile to acknowledge her work, this was her response 'I am just a devotee and I am very humbled by this opportunity to do my little contribution like the squirrels which helped Sri Rama with the building of Sethu. I cannot begin to describe the sense of fulfillment that I have derived, working on this translation. Though I have read the contents at least twice, it is only while translating, that I am forced to look at each and every word, phrase, and sentence very critically to grasp the exact message. I do not know what I have done in my past to deserve such blessing.' She has reluctantly agreed to our mentioning just her initials in this acknowledgment.

Smt. MRF is a software engineer by profession. After several years of working in this field, she finally quit her job to spend full-time with her children as they were growing up. Bhagavatham has been her guiding force throughout her life and Bhaktha Vijayam has been her inspiration. She says 'Of course, Deivathin Kural is the culmination of all these. It has touched my soul as nothing else has ever done' She had already started to translate it for her children, some years ago. She had most of her early education (elementary and high) in Ramakrishna Mission schools, where she was introduced to Sanskrit, Bhagavadgita, Ramayana, etc. While in college, she enjoyed Tamil literature a lot, especially Kamba Ramayanam, Silappathikaram, and Manonmaneeyam. The allusions to puranic stories in those works made her want to learn the original. She currently attends the Bhagavatham and Ramayanam classes offered in her local temple to study them in their original version. She also enjoys reading Kamba Ramayanam for its literary beauty !

We are indeed grateful to Smt. MRF for her devotion and dedication and thank her for contribution in translating this Volume 4 for all of us.

As in all such projects, there will always be scores of silent volunteers, who do things just for the pleasure of rendering service. In this case, they have performed this as a yagna because of their unstinting devotion to the Pāramāchāryā. We are grateful to all of them.

It is because of the Divine grace and the blessings of the Pāramāchāryā that we even thought of this monumental project. While we were still thinking of the project, H.H. Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swāmigal and H.H. Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi Swāmigal gave us the much needed encouragement and impetus to plunge into this ocean of nectar in the manner of what Krishna did to Arjuna to spur him into action. We offer our obeisance to the two Āchāryas.

Sri Kanchi Mahaswami
Peetarohana Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust
Mumbai
February 13, 2006

* * *

GUIDANCE TO PRONUNCIATION OF NON-ENGLISH WORDS WITH DIACRITICAL MARKING

ALPHABET	TO BE PRONOUNCED AS
Ā ā	A in August, Author
Ē ē	A in April, Angel
Ī ī	E in East, Eagle
Ō ō	o in open, over
Ū	oo in cool, Tool
S̄ s̄	S in Sivaji, Sankar Syamala
N n̄	n in rent, under, bundle
L̲ l̲	l in pluck, click, block

The word Āchāryā with capital A, whenever appearing, refers to Ādhi Sankara Bhagavadpādā

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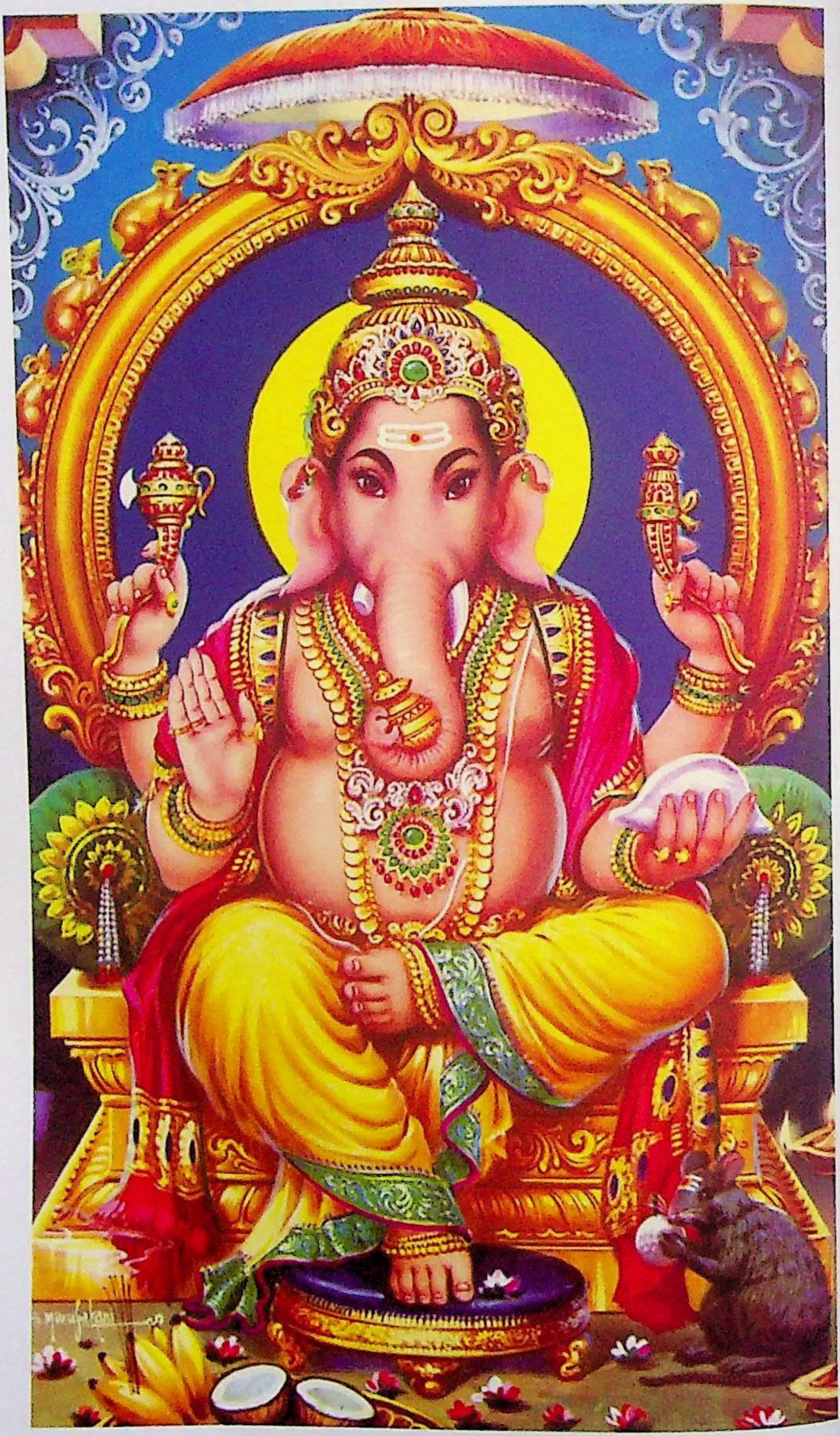
MANGAḺĀRAMBHAM



CHILD OF HIGH PARENTAGE

It is usual for people to be extremely indulgent to children of parents who are high placed due to wealth or power or status since that is the easiest way to curry favour with such parents. Their own children are dear to the parents. Even the common crow is no exception to this.

High placed parents are of different kinds in the world, of varying importance. But, if the try to find out who is the one whose parents are the highest it is *Pi̱ḻḻaiyār* whose parents are *Pārvathi-Paramēśwarā*, the father and mother of the universe.

Worship of the Lord and *Ambāḻ* is not easily done. There are procedures, rituals and restrictions. But they can be easily pleased by pleasing their pet child *Pi̱ḻḻaiyār*. *Pi̱ḻḻaiyār* is so ubiquitous that he is easily accessible. Just is a child is easily pleased with small things. He too can be easily satisfied. A piece of (dhurva) grass or the wild flower Yercum is all that has to he offered to him and he is pleased. If it is *Mōdhakam* that is offered His pleasure is greater. Even offering a coconut to him is easy without any ritual. It has to be just struck over the ground with force so that it breaks into small pieces. When children pick up the pieces Pillaiyar is immensely pleased.

Grandfather's Distinction

When it is to be conveyed that a child is respectable, it is customary to refer to the father and grandfather who are well known. This is called pravaram (lineage). There is a *slōkā* that states such a pravaram for *Pi̱ḻḻaiyār*.

Māthāmaha Mahāśailam Mahasthath apithāmaham |
Kāranam jagathām vandhē Kantādhupari vārañam ||

Pravaram should include the great-grandfather's name. But here it stops with the grandfather.

In the *Pūrva* Bhāga (opening part) of the *Vishṅu Sahasranāmam* starting from *Vyāsa*'s great-grandfather *Vaśishtā* all names are mentioned upto his son.*Sukāchāryā* who was celebate. After *Śukā*, instead of descendants, his *śishya* (disciple) parampara (line) is usually traced - *Śukā*'s *śishya* is *Gāudapādha*, *Gāudapādha*'s *śishya* is *Gōvindha Bhagvadhpādhā*, and then *Gōvindha Bhagvadhpādhā's śishya* is our *Āchāryā*, *Śankara Bhagvadhpādhā*.

Obeisance to guru (Guru Vandhanam) should precede everything. It is quite fortunate that this Guru Parampara is being remembered while discussing *Vignēśwarā* , whose *pūjā* initiates everything. *Vignēśwarā* is also associated with *Vyāsa*. '*Vyāsa Gaṅapathi*' is one of the variant of his forms. He is the one who scribed the *Mahābhāratā* for *Vyāsa*. Therefore, we are happy that we are refering to *Vyāsa* here.

The *slōkā* on *Pil̲laiyār's* lineage starts with his maternal grandfather. Generally, pravaram mentions only the paternal line. The tharpanam (ancestral rite) is the only time when three of the maternal ancestors are mentioned. But our *Pil̲laiyār's* father *Śiva* has no father. He is really Swayambhu (self-manifested). Mother *Parāśakthi* is without a begining. But on a few occasions, she has taken a few *avathārās* to fulfill her yearning to mingle with her own children, the people of this world. The father of one of these *avathārās* has been mentioned as the grandfather of *Pil̲laiyār* at the beginning of this *slōkā*.

'*Māthāmaha Mahāśailam*' - he who has the great mountain Himodhgiri (*Himālayā*) as his maternal grandfather.

'*Māthāmaha*' means mother's father. '*Pithāmahā*' means father's father.

Ambāḻ is the *ādhi Kāraṅi* (the first cause) and *Akilāṅda Janani* (universal mother). However as part of her *līlā*, she has also become *Dhākshāyani* (Daksha's daughter), *Pārvathi* (Himavan's daughter), *Mīnākshi* (Malayadhvaja's daughter), *Kāthyāyani* (*Kathyāyana's* daughter), etc.

When we mention *Paramaśivā*, we do it along with *Pārvathi. Pārvathi* means parvatha's (mountain's) daughter. It is only during this *Pārvathi avathārā* that she descended as the daughter of the *Himālayā*, performed thapas, softened the *Kāmāri* (Manmathā's foe) *Paramēśwarā's* mind, married Him, and made Him a gruhastha. It is with respect to this *Pārvathi*, the *slōkā* mentions '*Māthāmaha Mahāśailam*'.

If you are wondering, why it stars with the maternal line instead of father's line,' the response comes in the second line: '*Mahasthath apithāmaham*'.

In this, the term 'mahasthath'meaning 'he who is in the jyothis-form,' refers to *Pi̲l̲laiyār*. '*apithāmaham*' means one who has no grandfather on paternal line.

This *slōkā* subtly conveys the greatness of the child by referring to the mother's father Himodhgiri, the highest mountain on earth. who got his daughter after an arduous thapas and the father who has no father but manifested on his own.

After saying '*Māthāmaha Mahāśailam* mahasthath *apithāmaham*' in the first half, the second half of this *slōkā* speaks of his own distinction: 'Don't think he is really born of his father and mother. He is also a *Parabrāhma swarūpa* (personification), who doesn't have any birth. He is indeed the cause of universe. '*Kāranam jagathām*'. That which is the cause of the jagath (universe) came as the son of *Śiva-Śakthi*. I bow to him: '*Vandhē*'. Hence, it says '*Kāranam jagathām* vande'.

This cause of the jagath, to charm us by its appearance, has not taken a simple human form but with an elephant face above the neck of this human body, the face that makes us gaze again and again with unsatiable longing: '*Kantādhupari vārañam*'. '*kantādh upari*' means above the neck. 'Vāranam' means elephant.

Uncle's Distinction

Another *slōkā* speaks of *Vignēśwarā 's*, greatness because of his uncle.

Śrīkānthō māthulō yasya Jananī sarvamangaḻā |
Janaka*: śankarō dēvā: tham vandhē kunjarānanam* ||

I have said that the earlier *slōkā* started with his maternal grandfather, contrary to the norm. There is an explanation for that. While mentioning the parents separately, it is usual to mention mother first as 'mātha-pithā', Even the *Vēdhās* proclaim 'Regard mother as God' before stating 'Regard father as God'. Saint poetess Avvai also gives the first place to the mother as God. Therefore, we may justify the mentioning of maternal grandfather first when both grandfathers are mentioned.

Curiously, this *slōkā* mentions *māmā* (mother's brother) first even before the parents!

'*Śrīkānthō māthulō yasya*' - 'he whose *māmā* is *Mahā Vishñu*'. *Māthula* means *māmā*. *Śrīkāntha* means Lakshmi's husband, *Mahā Vishñu*. This name makes it possible to start the *slōkā* with an auspicious '*Śrī*', and also refer to *Mahālakshmi*. *Mahā Vishñu* is the protector of all the worlds and *Mahālakshmi* is the presiding deity for wealth so essential for the functioning of the world. By saying that *Vignēśwarā* is the nephew of such a couple, it is conveyed that he is highly connected.

It is quite well known that *Subrahmañya* has a close relationship with his *māmā*. We mention *Murugā* along with the phrase *'Māl marūgā'* ('Mal' is *Vishñu* and 'Marugan' is nephew in Tamil). Many verses in 'Thiruppugazh' mention this combination together. 'Marugan' comes from the word *'Marumagan'* (son-in-law) 'Marumagan' means nephew in relation to his *māmā* or aunt (father's sister). In the south, since it is the custom to marry *māmā's* or aunt's daughter, *'marumān'* himself usually becomes '*son-in-law*'

Vishñu and Ambāḻ

Mahā Vishñu is *Ambāḻ's* brother. '*Nārāyana Sahōdharī*' is another name for *Ambāḻ*. In *Ambāḻ's avathārās* as *Dhākshāyañi*, *Pārvathi*, or *Mīnākshi*, *Mahā Vishñu* did not take *avathār* as her brother. Only during *Krishña avathārā* they were somewhat like brother and sister. At the same time *Krishñā* was born as the son of *Dēvaki* and *Vāsudēva*, *Ambikā* took *avathār* as the daughter of *Nandhagōpa* and *Yaśōdhā*, who were to become later the foster parents of *Krishñā*. When the whole world was unconscious soon after the *Bhagawān's* birth, *Vāsudhēva* carried Him and left Him by the side of *Yaśōdhā* and then took with him *Ambāḻ*, who was born as her daughter. He did this according to *Bhagawān's* instructions. Soon after, *Kamsā* attempted to kill this *avathārā* of *Ambāḻ* under the impression that she was *Vāsudhēva*'s child born to kill him. When he raised this baby, intending to thrash it against the stone floor, she swiftly rose up in the sky assuming the original form of *Ambāḻ* and said, 'Fool! The one who has come for killing you is different', and disappeared. So goes the story in the *Bhāgavatha Purāñā*.

Even before this, *Nārāyanā* and *Parāśakthi*, who are the source for all these *avathārās*, used to be referred to as brother and sister. Neither *Nārāyanā* nor *Parāśakthi* has parents. They are of the form of the *Parabrāhmam*. But in general, as opposed to the state of *Śiva* as *sānthamūrthi* (personification of peace) after the end of worldly functioning, these two appear to enjoy conducting the world through the power of their *māyā* (illusion). In reality, these forces are neither two, nor three; it is simply one. This one entity when in the state of bliss, untouched by actions, is called

Śiva, when enjoying in the midst of worldly actions, is called either *Nārāyanā* when considered as male and *Parāśakthi* when considered as female. Since they assume the same form, qualities, and do the same actions, we regard *Vishṅu* and *Ambāḻ* as born together. Only siblings tend to resemble each other.

Earlier, I was talking about how the *marumān* himself could become son-in-law. *Subrahmaṅya Swāmi* is *'Marugan'* to *Mahā Vishṅu* not only because he is the son of His sister, but also because, *Vaḻḻi* and *Dēvāsēnā*, whom he married, originally manifested as *Mahā Vishṅu*'s daughters but later one went to a king of hunters and the other went to the king of *dēvās*, and were raised in their new homes. So, *Murugā* is marumagan to *Mahā Vishṅu* in both senses of the term; he is both uncle and father-in-law to *Murugā*.

Śuklāmbaradharam

Śuklāmbaradharam', the *slōkā* recited first before beginning anything, has a curious aspect: it doesn't mention any of *Piḻḻaiyār's* names directly! Neither a name associated with him directly, such as *Gaṅapathi*, *Ganēśā*, *Vināyakā*, *Vignēśwarā* , nor any name associating him with his parents, such as *Śivāthmaja*, Gowrisutha. And not a name associating him with his vehicle, weapon, or favorites, such as *Mūshikavāhana, Pāśahastā, Mōdhakapriya,* nor any name that denotes his characteristics, such as *Gajamukā, Ēkadhanthā, Lambōdharā,* nor any one of his myriad names associated with his various *līlās* is mentioned in this *slōkā*:

Śuklāmbaradharam, Vishṅum,
śaśivarṅam, chathurbhujam |
prasanna vadhanam dhyāyēth
sarva vignōpa śānthayē || '

'*Śuklāmbaradharam*' - 'one who is wearing white clothes'. Saraswathi and *Īśwarā* also wear white clothes. Unlike deities that are uniquely associated with yellow or red clothes and called as '*Pīthāmbaradhārī*' or '*Rakthāmbaradhārī*', *Pillaiyār* is not uniquely associated with white clothing.

Next comes '*Vishṇu*'. This is the reason why I started talking about this *slōkā*. *Māmā*'s name itself is used here to denote *marumān* - such inseparable identity between them. *Vishṇu* means all-pervading. Though it is specified here to denote that *Pillaiyār* is all-pervading, when we hear this name, don't we immediately think of his *māmā*?

'*Śaśivarṇam*' - 'one who has the complexion of the moon'. *Īśwarā* and Saraswathi are also described the same way.

'Chathurbhujam'- 'one who has four arms'. Almost all deities have four arms. Therefore, even this doesn't specify him uniquely.

'prasanna vadhanam'- 'one with cheerful countenance'. Would any deity be depicted with a morbid countenance? With the exception of *Kāli*, *Vīrabhadhra*, and Narasimha, who are described as fierce and angry, all other deities have a benign countenance blessing the *bhakthās* in thousands of idols everywhere. We may perhaps say that the blissful expression emanating from his broad, extensive elephant face is a notch higher.

Thus, none of the first five words in this *slōkā* (viz. '*śuklāmbaradharam*, *Vishṇum*, *śaśivarṇam*, chathurbhujam, prasanna vadhanam) appear to denote *Pillaiyār* uniquely. (At the mention of each of these words, we should do a 'kuttu'on the forehead - 'kuttu'means a gentle knock on the temples by the fists).

'dhyāyeth'- 'should do dhyāna or meditation'.

Meditate for what? - For, '*sarva vigna upa śānthaye*', meaning 'all *vigñas* (hurdles) to subside and disappear. This is where the special characteristic of *Pil̲l̲aiyār* comes out, though not specifically mentioned by any name. The *Swāmi* to pray to for the successful completion of any undertaking without hurdles, is none other than *Pil̲l̲aiyār*. This is why, at the beginning of any task, we have the tradition of performing *pūjā* to him - at least recite this one *slōkā* and do the ritual 'kuttu'on the temples.

Traditionally, a child is taught even at a very tender age, well before he has the capability to recite *slōkās*, 'Think of *Pil̲l̲aiyār*. Only then will you not have any troubles'. Therefore, when the child is able to learn the *slōkās*, it is enough to teach this *'sarva vignōpa śānthayē'*. The child will immediately understand that the *Swāmi* being prayed to with that *slōkā* must be *Pil̲l̲aiyār*.

The mention of *Vishñu* in this *slōkā* makes it clear that of all the relationships of *Pil̲l̲aiyār*, that of his *māmā Vishñu* is the most special one.

It is with regard to this, the *slōkā* mentioned just a while ago begins with '*Śrīkāntho māthulō yasya*' (one whose *māmā* is *Mahā Vishñu*, the husband of Lakshmi). (This remainds me of the practice of *'marumakkathāyam'* in *Malayālam* by which inheritance passes from *māmā* to *nephew)*.

The Greatness of the Parents'

After giving the first place to *māmā*, the *slōkā* mentions *māmā*'s sister *Ambāl̲*, his mother.

'*Jananī SarvaMangal̲ā*'

Who is '*Jananī*' (mother) of *Pil̲l̲aiyār*? She is 'Sarva *Mangal̲ā*', the *Parāśakthi*, whose form qualities and action are very auspicious.

A *slōkā* on *Ambāḻ* that most people are familiar with, starts with a reference to her as '*Sarva Mangaḻā*'.

'*Sarva mangaḻa māngalyē, šivē Sarvārtha sādhikē |*
charañyē thrayambikē Gowri, Nārāyañi namōsthuthē ||'

Among the numerous names of *Mahā Vishñu*, '*Šrīkāntha*' is the one that denotes all good fortunes because of the '*Šrī*' in it. Similarly the name '*Sarva Mangaḻā*' has been mentioned from the numerous names of *Ambāḻ*. Following the convention, after *Ambāḻ*, it mentions 'Janaka*: šankarō dēva:*', meaning, 'his father is *Paramašiva*'.

Though *Paramašiva* also has numerous names, just like the mention of highly auspicious names of '*Šrīkāntha*' and '*Sarvamangaḻā*', the name '*Šankarā*' is mentioned. '*Šankarā*' means 'one who performs good deeds' or 'one who provides great bliss'. To show that *Vignēšwarā* bestows '*Šrī*', '*Mangaḻām*', and 'Sukham' (bliss), this *slōkā* mentions his connection, namely to his *māmā*, mother, and father.

'*šrīkānthō vandhē kunjarānanam ||*'

'*tham kunjarānanam vandhē*' - 'I bow to such elephant-faced'.

Murugan and the Eldest

Apart from the grandfather, father, mother, and *māmā* his brother is also is very distinguished. *Piḻḻaiyār* is the first child for this whole universe. The *Vēdhās* themselves gave him the name '*jyeshta rāja*'. He has only a younger brother.

If an elder brother is a big shot, it is quite common to find his younger brother using the elder's name to act important. Similarly, if a younger brother is an influential official, the elder brother might use it to be domineering. But here, both the sons of *Īswarā* are outstanding in power, ability, and benediction.

Therefore, when glorifying *Pil̲l̲aiyār* through his relations, his younger brother must also be mentioned.

Pil̲l̲aiyār has sixteen special names. They are called '*shōdaśa nāmās*' (*shōdaśa*m means sixteen). When it is not possible to perform *pūjā* with the recitation of 'ashthōthra satham', at least these sixteen names should be recited.

'sumukaśchaika ēkadhanthaścha kapilō gajakarn̄aka: |
lambōdharaścha vikatō vignarājō Vināyaka: ||
Dhūmakēthur ganādhyakshō bhālachandhrō gajānanā: |
Vakrathun̄da: śūrpakarn̄ō Heramba: skandhapūrvaja: ||'

The last name in this list is '*Skandapūrvaja*' - 'one who was born before Skandā'. This name makes the elder brother distinguished through the younger brother.

A look at those related to him shows that he is a very highly placed child indeed. We must keep this child pleased. We should be vigilant and not do anything to provoke his anger. It is important that we earn good will of this eldest child of all the three worlds. Because of his virtuous mind, benevolent heart, and kindness, he will be gratified quite easily. If we make him happy, we can easily please his parents, *Pārvathi-Paramēśwarā*, and win all good from them.

* * *

OTHER DEITIES PAYING HOMAGE TO PIḺḺAIYĀR

The Venerable Child

Some people feel that they need not have any qualification themselves but can throw their weight around simply because of his connections. We see several such kids behaving in an irresponsible manner.

But how does this child of the highest of the high appear? - one we refer to as 'uchchi *Piḻḻaiyār*' (uchchi means zenith). He is unsurpassed in every aspect, be it physical strength, sharpness of intellect, strength of action, or the loving heart. His distinction is not just by virtue of his high level lineage. He has his own distinction. This is self-evident since he is referred to as *Piḻḻaiyār*, with an 'ar' suiffix that denotes respect and which is added only to elders and not a child.

As The Principal Deity

I mentioned earlier that if we keep *Piḻḻaiyār* pleased we can receive the blessings of *Īśwarā* and *Ambāḻ*. This doesn't mean that the power to bless is only with them and not with *Piḻḻaiyār*. He is as capable of showering grace as his parents are.

People who worship him as the principal deity and not because he is the son of *Īśwarā* and *Ambāḻ*, consider him to be the provider of all that is good in this world and the next. They are called '*Gāṅapathās*' or '*Gāṅapathyās*'. What they cite as evidence of the supremacy of their *upāsana mūrthi* is certainly convincing. They say, 'aren't those of you who worship *Śiva*, *Ambāḻ*, *Murugā*, or *Vishṅu* as your principal deity, also required to start your *pūjā* of those deities with the ritual 'kuttu' of '*śuklāmbaradharam*' followed by the worship of a symbolic hand-clumped *Piḻḻaiyār* (usually shaped with turmeric powder)? On the other hand, we who worship *Pillaiyār* as our principal deity don't start with any such preamble to any of your deities!' It can be said that even the opening *pūjā* that the *Vaishñavās* perform for the deity named *Vishwaksēna* or Thumbikkai *Āzhwār* is for a variant form of *Vignēśwarā* .

Pillaiyār has the unique distinction of receiving the agra (first) *pūjā*. *Gañapathi* worshippers say, 'just because the *slōkās* on him mention *Īśwarā*, *Ambāl*, *Vishñu*, *Murugān*, and the like, it is not at all correct to think that his glory comes from these other deities. On some occasion or the other, all these *Swāmis* also had to seek his grace for the successful completion of their undertaking'. They quote the *purāñās* to support this claim.

Deities do not at all have superior and inferior rankings! However, when the same *Paramāthmā* appears in different forms to fulfill different purposes, either for His own *līlās* or for catering to the appeal of various human tendencies, the *purāñās* do talk of the victory of some deity over some other on some particular occasions. This is only for the sake of helping devotees of those deities concentrate on their chosen deity. Isn't it true that the victory of one deity indicates defeat of another? The *bhakthās* of a particular deity choose to focus only on the victories of their deity and thereby strengthen their bhakthi. There is no mention of such defeat for *Pillaiyār*. But, there are of stories that talk of various other deities worshipping *Pillaiyār*.

The Son Who Was Worshipped by His Father

Īśwarā when he set out for Thripura samhāra (destroying the *Thripurāsurās*), he left without meditating on his son, forgetting that his son is indeed the revered *Pillaiyār*.

Pillaiyār won't give up his rightful dues! It was the unanimous decision of all the *dēvātās* that *Pillaiyār* must be given the first *pūjā*. Such a decision cannot be flouted even by his own father. This breach was, wrong and *Pi̱llaiyār* wouldn't let go of it so easily.

Therefore, while *Īśwarā*'s chariot was proceeding towards the *Thripurāsurās*, *Pi̱llaiyār* caused its axle to break and the chariot became immobile.

Īśwarā immediately understood what had happened and thought 'It is not proper for me to have put myself above the law just because of my higher status. Becuase of this very status I must obey the law, to set an example to the entire world. When it comes to the rule of law there is no room for considerations on grounds of personal relationships.

At once, he performed the *Pi̱llaiyār pūjā*. (On another occasion, he had also bowed down to his younger son and received the *Prañavōpadēśam*.)

No sooner did the father take the corrective action than *Pi̱llaiyār* rushed in and removed the hurdle. The chariot then continued its run and in the end, *Īśwarā* conquered those *asūrās*, earning the name *'Thripurānthaka'*.

The town named 'Acharūppākkam' between Chengleput and Thindivanam is commonly known to be the very same place where *Īśwarā*'s chariot broke down and stopped. 'Achchu' means axle; *'Ārū'* means broken; *'pākkam'* denotes place. Some people also call it *'Achchiruppākkam'*.

A similar incident happened recently, affirming this purānic story tale. We were having a *Śankara Matā* constructed in *Rāmēśwaram*. The marble for the *Āchāryā* statue was procured from Jaipur and the figures of *Āchāryāl* and his four *śishyās* sculpted in *Kānchīpuram* were being transported to *Rāmēśwaram* in a truck. On the way, exactly at *Achiruppākkam* ('Achchu' in

Tamil means axle) , the truck broke down! Only after breaking one hundred eight coconuts was the truck repaired and the journey resumed. After that, with no more hurdles, the consecration and *kumbābhishēkam* were all completed on a grand scale. Even this setback appeared to me to be a blessing in disguise. I think, to establish firmly that he was indeed the *Śankarā* of *Kailāsa*, our *Śankara Bhagavadhpādhā* broke the axle of his modern chariot, the truck.

To the Rescue of His Mother

The *Lalithōpākhyānam* describes how *Ambāl* caused *Vignēśwarā* to manifest and with his assistance, gained victory.

When *Lalithāmbikā* went to war with Bhandāsura, she took an army called *Śakthisēna* consisting entirely of *dhēva* women. She had an Agni fort (fort of fire) built and camped there with the entire army. Bhandāsura had an assistant named *Viśukra*, who possessed enormous powers of *manthrā*. He made a yanthra (machine) called *Vigna yanthrā* and threw it into the Agni fort so that it world land in *Ambāl's* tent. Similar to the psychological warfare of the present day, that yanthra would turn the enemy's mind itself favorable towards their opponents, and it would cause the change of mind immediately.

As soon as the *vigna yanthrā* landed there, due to its stupefying power, the *Śakthisēnās*' mind changed completely. The soldiers thought, 'Why should we kill the *asūrās*? Isn't it violence? If *Ambāl* has enmity towards them, how does it matter to us? Basically, why should we be subservient to this *Ambāl*? She derives her strength only from us, isn't that why she has gathered us here? All these days, we were foolish enough to be serving her, thinking that she is above us and has the strength to govern us. Now we have understood. We should drop all our weapons and go on a strike. This mistress-servant model won't work any more. Everyone is equal.' The senas started indulging in trade unionism.

They further thought, 'We have the Agni fort. No one can penetrate into this and disturb our sleep.' So saying, the entire sena slept off, snoring.

There is an astra called *jrumbańāstra*. When it is launched, the people who are struck by it will start yawning uncontrollably and fall down losing all their vigor. *Jrumbańa* means 'to yawn'.

Weapons more potent and strange when compared to the modern ones, generated by the power of manthra alone, were available in olden times as seen from the *Purāńās*. When we read about the power of *Brahmāstra*, *Nārāyanāstra*, *Pāsupathāstra*, and the like, the atom bomb and hydrogen bomb seem to pale into insignificance. Similar to the problem of foetal destruction and deformity caused by the radiation from these bombs, the apāndavāstra sent by *Aśwaththāma* in those days affected the foetus in Uththarā's womb. Only *Krishńa Paramāthmā* could save it.

Ambāḻ saw her army on strike, simply lying in deep slumber. Fortunately, they didn't engage in any kind of sabotage. Doesn't she, who is *jnāna* personified, know the truth? All these are her *līlā* only.

She herself had created such a hurdle in the form of *Viśukra* only for the purpose of bringing out *Vignēśwarā 's* glory.

From the eternal pair of *Śiva-Śakthi*, the *śakthi* (energy) part itself came out of the *jnānāgni* kuńda as *Lalithāmbikā* for the purpose of destroying *Bhandāsura*. At the same time, *Śiva* also came out in the form of *Kāmēśwara* to marry her and thus avoid sending her to war as an unmarried maiden. This couple is usually referred to as *Kāmēśwara-Kāmēśwari*. This *Kāmēśwari* is the same as our *Kāmākshi*, and *Kāmakōti Pītam* is her abode.

Ambāḻ thought it was not enough to just bring out *Īśwarā* as *Kāmēśwara*, but she should also bring out her darling child *Gaṅapathi* to have his glory revealed while she was still in the form of *Lalithāmbikā*. The *Śakthisēnā's* is stupor gave the opportunity.

At once, *Ambāḻ* directed her gaze brimming with love on *Kāmēśwara*, with a gentle smile. His face also assumed a smiling countenance. From the union of this glowing smile resulting from the mutual love of this First Couple, *Mahāgaṅapathi* was born. Such a birth, the result of the fusion of the smile from *Ambāḻ* and *Īśwarā* aptly produced the cheerful countenance, the blissful form, and the beautiful face of this *Mahāgaṅapathi*.

This manifestation of *Piḻḻaiyār*, one of his many, is recounted in *Lalithōpakhyānam*. This *Lalithōpakhyānam* is a part of *Brahmāṅda Purāṅā*, one of the eighteen *purāṅās*.

The manner in which *Ambāḻ* caused the *avathār* of *Piḻḻaiyār*, simply by smiling at *Īśwarā* is mentioned in *Lalithā Sahasranāmam* as *'Kāmēśwara mukhālōka kalpītā Śrī Ganēśwarā'*

Parāśakthi, whose power is so vast that it reduces the power of any *Dēvatā* to a small fraction of Parāśakthi and, therefore, she could have rendered the *Vigna Yanthra* powerless. However, since *Vignēśwarā* has been specially designated for the purpose of removing hurdles, she ordained that that it should be accomplished only through his assistance, hence this *līlā* of hers.

Just as she was obeying an established law, *Vignēśwarā* , who was created by her gaze, also displayed humility and prostrated before her without a trace of ego. He did not give in to such thoughts as, 'even the great *Parāśkathi* had to seek my help.' Only after receiving her blessings with humility, he proceeded to destroy the *Vigna Yanthra*.

The *Yanthra* was buried in a corner of the Agni fort. *Piḻḻaiyār* discovered it and broke it into pieces by piercing it with his tusk.

Immediately the *Dēva gaṅās* woke up from their sleep. Their minds changed to their original form. With bhakthi and loyalty towards *Ambā̲l*, they fought with enthusiasm end, *Bhāndasūra* was defeated.

Helping Murugā

When the mother and father themselves gave credit to *Pi̲l̲laiyār* for their victories, how could his younger brother succeed without his assistance? *Subrahmaṅya Swāmi* had to seek his elder brother's assistance for success in romance.

The elder brother was the reason for taking up *sanyāsa* and becoming the mendicant *Dhandāyudhapāṅi* . The story of the brothers' race around the world for the coveted prize of a fruit is quite well-known. *Subrahmaṅya*, who renounced the world in remorse at that time, was appeased and brought back by *Īśwarā* and *Ambā̲l*. He then achieved the main mission of his *avathārā* also - the destruction of *Sūra*. After that, to tease *Va̲l̲li*, who was pining for him, he approached her in the guise of a hunter. Not recognising him, she ignored him. Simply revealing his real form would have been sufficient to win her love. Instead, he thought of this as a good opportunity to reveal the glory of his elder brother to the world. He wanted to make people realise that the way to remove the hurdles encountered when undertaking any task is worshipping *Pi̲l̲laiyār*. Therefore, he meditated on *Mahāgaṅapathi*.

As soon as the call came from the younger brother, the elder one immediately appeared in the form of a mad elephant and chased *Va̲l̲li* here and there. Losing all sense of directions, *Va̲l̲li* was running, constantly showing '*Murugā*'. On encountering *Murugā* on the way in the guise of the old hunter, she took refuge in him; she didn't realize who it was and tightly hugged him as a child hugging its grandfather. Now that the glory of *Vināyakā* has been revealed, *Subrahmaṇya* thought he shouldn't carry on the play anymore and revealed his form and drowned *Va_lli* in ecstasy.

Va_lli's marriage followed. *Ganēśā*, himself a confirmed bachelor, assisted his younger brother in having his love fulfilled.

Ārūnagirināthar has mentioned *Mahāgaṇapathi*'s part in *Īśwarā*'s Thripura Samhāra and *Subrahmaṇya's* marriage with *Va_lli* in his song *Vignēśwarā Sthuthi* in Thiruppugazh.

Rāmā and Vināyakā

I need to narrate how *Mahā Vishṇu* paid homage to *Pi_llaiyār* and had his glory revealed during his *avathārā* of *Rāmā* and *Krishṇā* in the *śāsthrā* way.

Everyone may be knowing that *Rāmā*'s worshiped *Śiva* when he consecrated *Rāmalinga* at *Ramēśwaram* after killing *Rāvaṇā*. He installed navagrahas and performed *pūjā* for successful completion of the bridge across the sea, at a place called *Navapāshānam* on the Ramanathapuram sea coast. The present day Dhevipattinam is this *Navapāshāṇam*. Even now, pilgrims to *Ramēśwaram* definitely go to *Navapāshāṇam* when they visit the surrounding holy places. There is yet another place that must be visited when doing this pilgrimage. Actually, well-informed people will start the *Sēthu Yāthra* from this place only.

This is the very same place where *Rāmachandramūrthi* worshipped *Vignēśwarā* . It is called *Uppūr*. Since *Rāmā* travelled from the north, this place will be before *Navapāshāṇam*. Shouldn't '*śuklāmbaradharam*' be recited with the ritual 'kuttu' even before worshipping the Navagrahas?

Rāmā was a true role model to show how everything must be conducted according to the strict tradition and injuctions of *śāsthrā*. If he performed *pūjā* to gratify the navagrahas before *sēthubandhanam* (building the bridge), he would have definitely preceded it with a *pūjā* to *Pil̲laiyār*. The *Uppūr Pil̲laiyār*, who is near *Navapāshānam*, is the one worshipped by *Rāma*. He is venerated as *varaprasādhi* (grantor of wishes). He bestows his grace on everyone while himself remaining in the open, not even having an enclosure. He never permits anyone to build a vimāna over him; some hurdle or the other is created by him for every attempt to build one. He is sitting in the open, simplest of the simple, soaked by the rain as well as scorched by the heat of the sun. He has even earned the nickname in Tamil which means '*Vināyakā* who enjoys the sunshine'.

'Tundi' is a nickname in Sanskrit for *'thōndhi Gan̄apathi'* (pot-belleyed *Gan̄apathi*). *Tundirāja Gan̄apathi* in *Kāśi* is much renowned. With possible connection with this, there is also a *Vināyakā kshēthram* called *'Thon̄di'* in Tamil Nādu. This is also mentioned as a place where *Rāmā* worshipped *Vināyakā*. If we proceed south from *Vēdhāran̄yam* along the seacoast, this *'Thon̄di'* is roughly in the middle of *Vēdhāranyam* and *Uppūr*. *Rāmā* was supposed to have contemplated on building the bridge from this point originally. So he performed the *Pil̲laiyār pūjā* here and *Pil̲laiyār* also appeared before him. He blessed *Rāmā* with sure victory, but advised him to start the bridge further south to reduce the labor involved. He also let it be known that it will provide a more straightforward approach to the entrance of the fort of Lankā.

This *Thon̄di Vināyakā* is also sitting without a vimāna over his head. Perhaps in both places, he didn't want all the pomp and luxury of a temple while his *māmā* was going through hardship, wandering in rain and heat and building a bridge to Lankā. *Āchāryā's Ganēśā* Pancharathna *sthōthram* is on this *Thon̄di Gan̄apathi*. It is the fruit of the blessing received from his worship on Īśwarasuthā (son of *Īśwarā*) that enabled *Rāmā* to destroy *Rāvanā*, earning the name *Vijaya Rāghava*. In addition, he rejoined his lost wife and became *Sīthā Rāmā*, and on his return, he performed *pūjā* to the father *Īśwarā* in the form of *Rāmālingam*.

Earlier, I was talking about transporting *Āchāryā's* figure to *Rameśwaram* in a truck. Just as we did in *Achirupākkam,* we broke 108 coconuts in *Uppūr* also. While *Pil͟laiyār* removed the hurdle for *Īśwarā* in the first place, it is the good fortune earned by *Rāmā*'s worship in the second place that has blessed us with *Rameśwaram*, which is a holy jyothirlinga *Mahā kshēthram* as a *prasādam* from *Rāmā*. *Āchāryā*, while going to *Rameśwaram*, thus showed his connection to both *Rāmā* and *Īśwarā*.

In *Krishn̄a avathārā*, there is a long, elaborate story that narrates *Mahā Vishn̄u*'s worship of his *marumān*.

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GAṆANĀTHA WORSHIPPED BY KRISHṆĀ

The Story of Syamanthaka :

There is a story in *Bhāgavatham* called *Syamanthaka Maṇi Upākhyānam*. *Ākhyānam* means story. *Upa-ākhyānam* means side story. While an ithihāsa or *purāṇā* narrates the main, long story, the little side stories that come in between are called *upākhyānam*. Some of these deal with characters that have no connection with the main characters. Stories like *Naḻōpākhyānam* in *Mahābhāratā* are some such. But there are some others that are inseparably intertwined with the main story and connected to the main characters, but have their own central themes. Such *upākhyānams* cannot be delinked from the main stories.

Syamanthaka Maṇi upākhyānam is one such story that is part and parcel of *Bhāgavatham*. The *upākhyānam* revolves around a divine gem called Syamanthaka and how *Krishṇa Paramāthmā* had to sufer a slander on its account and his attempts to come clear from the slander.

The same story appears in *Vishṇu Purāṇām* and with a slight variation, in *Skāndham* also. The latter narrates it in the form of a conversation between *Nandhikēśwarā* and Sanath *Kumārā*. It is in this *Skāndha* version, the connection to *Vignēśwarā* comes in. The story that *Nandhikēśwarā* told Sanath *Kumārā* is the one that I am going to relate now. Here and there, I might refer to some parts of the versions of *Bhāgavatha* and *Vishṇu Purāṇām*.

Sūrya and Vināyakā

Bhagawān was living in *Dwārakā* after his marriage with Rukmini. There were two prominent brothers of the *Yādhavā* clan named *Sathrājith* and *Prasēnā*. *Sathrājith*, the elder, was a devotee of *Sūrya Bhagawān* (Sun God).

At present, even orthodox followers regard *Sūrya* as just one of the retinue of deities and perform only simple worship such as *Sūrya* Namaskāram or recite *Ādhithya* Hridhayam. However, in the olden days, there were a number of people who worshipped *Sūrya Bhagawān* as their principal deity. The worship of *Sūrya* as the Paramātma *Swarūpam* (form) is called *'Śouram'*. The temple in *Kōṅārk*, which draws even foreigners to view it with awe, is that of *Sūrya Bhagawān*. '*Kōṅārk*'is a compound word that splits as *'Kōṅa'* and 'Ark'. It means 'part of *Sūrya*'. 'Arka' means *Sūrya*. Arka's 'konam'is *Kōṅārk*.

The mention of 'Arka' reminds me of something related to *Pil̲laiyār*. I was thinking whether *Pil̲laiyār has any connection with Sūrya*. When the topic touched *Kōṅārk* and then 'Arka' by chance, I found the connection.

Pil̲laiyār does have 'Arka'connection. Which flower is the most suitable for offering him during his archana, or to make a garland for him? Isn't it 'Yercum' flower? 'Yercum' flower is actually called 'arka'flower. It is 'arka' that became 'erukka' (Tamil). Both *Sūrya* and erukku have the name 'Arka'. In the temple at *'Sūryanār Kōil'*, it is the erukku tree that is present as its 'sthala vriksham'(each temple has a designated tree called its sthala vriksham). Except for the nocturnal blooming flowers, all others blooms as the sun rises. Among these, *Sūrya* has a special presence in this Yercum flower. When *bhakthās* offer these flowers at the feet of *Pil̲laiyār* during archana, it becomes a symbolic prostration to him by *Sūrya*.

The Divine Gem Obtained Through Thapas

Once, *Sathrājith* performed a severe thapas on the shores of the ocean, meditating on his ishta *mūrthi Sūrya* (desired deity). *Sūrya Bhagawān* appeared before him and asked him what boon he was seeking.

Sūrya Bhagawān was wearing a very shiny gem around his neck. This is the gem (*māñī*) named Syamanthaka. *Sathrājith* knew that this gem is capable of providing wealth and great fortunes in addition to its radiance. Therefore, when asked what boon he desired, he requested *Bhagawān* to bless him with the *Syamanthaka Mañī* that he was wearing. When deities say, 'I will give you a boon', they gladly fulfill whatever the *bhakthās* desire. So, *Sūrya Bhagawān* immediately removed the gem and placed it around *Sathrājith*'s neck.

He then added, 'this gem which shines as another of my radiant form, will keep diseases and afflictions away from wherever it is present. In addition, it will produce a huge quantity of gold every day. However, to be worthy of receiving such health and wealth, the one who wears it should be absolutely clean both inside (in mind) and out (in body). Even a slight dereliction will cause great calamities' and disappeared.

Sathrājith returned home wearing this shining, radiant *Syamanthaka Mañī*. The people of *Dwārakā* couldn't even see him under the glare of this gem. They could only see the brilliance of a light. They were awe struck, watching this light form going through the streets and thought that perhaps *Sūrya Bhagawān* himself had come to have a *dharśan* of *Krishña Paramāthmā*. Only after seeing him at close quarters, they recognized him. They came to know that he had received the *Syamanthaka* as *Sūrya prasādam*.

Since *Krishñā* is a connoisseur of fine things, he showed great appreciation for the beauty of this gem. As *Sathrājith* listened to his admiration, he thought that the *Bhagawān* desired to have it for himself.

Krishñā's Detachment

Krishñā is *Parabrāhmam* Itself, and he is a *jnāni* with total detachment although just outwardly he appears to indulge in various enjoyments such as stealing butter, doing *rāsa līlā* with gopis and leading a house-holder's life with sixteen thousand wives. He had every justification to have had the royal coronation for himself after killing *Kamsā*. The people of Mathura, who had become extremely fond of him, would have only been immensely pleased had he become their king. However, he did not desire the royal power; instead, he made Ugrasēna, the father of *Kamsā*, the king. *Ugrasēna* being *Dēvakī's* uncle is also his maternal grandfather. After killing *Kamsā*, he left Mathura and established *Dwārakā* as a small kingdom and became known as *Dwārakādhīsā*. Even then, he did not declare himself to be the king of this sovereign kingdom. Assuming only a second place, he gave up the higher status to his brother Balarāma. In spite of being a *pūrñāvathāra* (perfect incarnation), *Krishñā* lived with such humility and absolute detachment to wealth.

Bhāgavatham also talks about *Mahā Vishñu* in a similar vein while narrating the manifestation of *Mahālakshmi* during the churning of ocean for amrutha and then her selection of *Mahā Vishñu* as her husband. Just like his detachment for land and gold, he also has a detached attitude to women. While all other *dēvās* were longing for and hoping to be garlanded by *Mahālakshmi*, only *Mahā Vishñu* was sitting with total detachment. This made her think, 'I should choose him as my husband, who displays such strength of mind. I should live in such a way as to deserve his love; there lies my pride.' and garlanded him. While he is detached, he is also full of grace. Hence he accepted her and gave her a place on his very bosom.

I was just trying to stress *Krishñā's* absolute detachment. All the wealth and paraphernalia came looking for him. We see that the conch, chakra, and *Garūda* of *Mahā Vishñu* came to him on different occasions. Even *Rāmā* didn't receive any of these. The Kousthubha gem worn by *Mahā Vishñu* also came only to *Krishñā*.

We note this in the verse, *'Kasthūri thilakam lalāta palakē, vakhasthalē kousthubham'*. Why would one who is wearing such divine kousthubha go after the Syamanthaka?

Even if he had sounded as though thinking 'Let *Sathrājith* part with the gem', it was only to give it to *Ugrasēnā Mahārāja*. That hint was also intended only for the welfare of the state and not because of his love for his grandfather. *Sathrājith* was a private citizen. Therefore, the wealth, health, and all else provided by the Syamanthaka would belong only to family. However, if it was with the king, all its good will belong to the entire country. This is the reason why he talked like that.

Even Artha *Šāsthrā* doesn't permit a private citizen to have a possession that exceeds the royal wealth in value for the simple reason that people might regard him above the king and thus be induced to behave in an unlawful manner. It is Artha *Šāsthrā*'s verdict that invaluable gems should belong to the king. 'Rājā rathnahāri'goes the saying.

When *Bhagawān* made a subtle suggestion for a good reason, *Sathrājith* thought, 'What do I care about king or minister? The king was only appointed by him - that too his own grandfather! Under this pretext, he is trying to take this for himself.'

The moral of this *upākhyānam* is how greed for things corrupts the mind.

Not only did *Sathrājith* misunderstand *Krishñā*, he also feared him. He thought, '*Krishñā* has killed the great wrestlers like *Chāñūra* and *Mushtīka*, and even as a youth, he killed *Kamsā*. He chased away the strong Jarāsandha seventeen times. He is cunning and capable of conjuring up things. If I incur his enmity, how can I stand it?'

Unable to give up the Syamanthaka but at the same time, not having the courage to keep it, he felt tormented.

The story demonstrates how material possessions can drive one crazy.

For the time being, he passed it on to his brother Prasēna and got some peace. *Prasēnā* was stronger and more intelligent than he was. So he thought he would pass on the nuisance to him a little.

The younger *Prasēnā* happily wore the Syamanthaka and went for hunting. (The *Skāndha Purāñā* says that he went along with *Krishñā* only. What I am saying follows the version from *Bhāgavatham* and *Vishñu Purāñām*).

Remember the condition that one who wears the syamanthaka is required to be absolutely clean inside and out? While he was in the forest, *Prasēnā* happened to get a little unclean. He was unable to wash his hands and feet since no water was available nearby. Just at that time a lion came, killed him, and ate him. Even the lion was attracted by this mini sun-like syamanthaka. It grabbed this gem that was transforming the dark jungle into broad daylight and was moving through the forest.

Jāmbavān

Jāmbavān was living in a mountain cave within that jungle; this is the same *Jāmbavān*, king of bears, who fought along with the army of monkeys to help *Rāmā* in the war with *Rāvanā.*

Finally, when Rāmā shed his body in river *Śarāyu* and ascended to *Vaikuntā*, he took everyone else along with him except *Ānjanēya* and *Jāmbavān*. They had the capacity to show by example how even this very *bhūlōkā* (earth), which is full of sin and grief, will be transformed into Vaikunta simply by meditating on *Rāmā* constantly. To demonstrate this truth to the world, he thought he would leave them here as *chiranjīvi* (living forever). Similarly, he made *Vibhīshañā* stay in Lankā as *chiranjīvi.*

We always speak highly of the human race. But *Rāmachandramūrthi* didn't think any human possessed the capacity to meditate on him constantly and therefore didn't bestow the *chiranjīvithvam* (the status of living forever) on any human. He has only left an asura, a monkey, and a bear as eternal symbols of bhakthi to him.

Ashwaththāmā Balir Vyāsō Hanūmāmścha Vibhīshaṅā: |
Kripa: Paraśurāmaścha sapthaithē chiranjīvina: ||

This *slōkā* names seven *chiranjīvis*: *Ashwaththāmā, Mahābaḻi, Vyāsa,* Hanumān, *Vibhīshaṅā,* Kripa, and *Paraśūrāmā.* Though *Jāmbavān* is not included in this list, he is also living as *chiranjīvi.* It is usual to refer to anyone who is a long-time expert in any field as 'isn't he a *Jāmbavān*?'

Agasthyā and the ever-sixteen *Mārkaṅdēyā* are also *chiranjīvis*, though not mentioned in this *slōkā.*

Jāmbavān, who has been living from the *Thrēthā yuga* time of *Rāmā* and still living in the Dhwāpara yuga during the time of this story, saw the lion carrying the *Syamanthaka Maṅī.* He had a baby named *Sukumāra.* If you wonder a baby at that age, what do we know about such *chiranjīvis* and that too a bear? He thought that the shiny gem would be just the right kind of toy for his baby.

At once, this very strong *Jāmbavān* fought with the lion and killed it. He took the gem away and hung it above the baby's cradle as a mobile. (Apparently, Vāli hung *Rāvanā* himself as a mobile above Angadha's cradle, calling it a ten-headed insect.)

The blinding brilliance of the syamanthaka didn't seem to bother the baby bear. It probably was just like a flash light for it.

Fourth Phase of Moon Seen by *Krishṅā*

The *Skāndha* version that includes *Piḻḻaiyār's* connection in the syamanthaka *upākhyānam* introduces a new aspect here. I already mentioned that according to this version, *Prasēnā* and *Krishṅā* went together for the hunting expedition. Then *Prasēnā* got separated was killed by the lion, and finally the gem reached *Jāmbavān*.

Bhagawān was searching for *Prasēnā* for a long time not noticing that even the sun had set. A little after the sunset, when he looked up at the sky by chance he saw the fourth-phase moon.

After New Moon, the first time moon is clearly visible on the sky is on its fourth phase. The third-phase usually rises around eight in the morning and sets before eight in the evening. Until sunset around six in the evening, the moon won't be visible at all due to the brightness of the sun. During twilight, around 6:30 to 7:00, it will be visible dimly, low in the western horizon. So one has to look very keenly. Fourth-phase usually rises around nine in the morning and sets around nine at night. Therefore, around seven or eight at night, if one looks up about thirty to forty degrees, a natural incline, it is readily visible. This is how *Krishṅā* saw it.

At once, he thought, 'Oh, it is dark! I should stop searching the forest for now' and returned to *Dwārakā* with his retinue.

The Master Who Was - The Victim of Suspicion

When *Prasēnā* did not return from the hunting expedition, *Sathrājith* immediately suspected no one but *Krishṅā* - not just a suspicion, but a firm belief that *Krishṅā* must have attacked and killed his brother. According to *Bhāgavatham*, though *Krishṅā* didn't accompany *Prasēnā*, *Sathrājith* thought that *Krishṅā* arranged to have him killed through some others. He thought, 'He already had an eye for the syamanthaka. It gave him a great opportunity when *Prasēnā* went to the forest, wearing it. If he doesn't return, people might conclude that he was attacked by some wild animals. So *Krishńā* must have sent his men to finish him off and bring the gem.' This was *Sathrājith*'s firm conclusion.

When descending down as a human, even the *Paramāthman* suffers all the afflictions that humans in general suffer including false accusations. The secret of the *avathārās* is to teach the people many things even while subjecting themselves to such hardships in their human forms.

Sathrājith charged the innocent *Bhagawān* with two criminal offences: one that *Krishńā* had killed *Prasēnā*, and two that he had stolen the gem and had hidden it somewhere. He spread these false accusations everywhere.

Gossip is deadly. People's minds are fickle. One day they may hero-worship some leader with great hoopla and the next day they may throw him out unconcerned. We see this in practice. This has been prevalent all the time to a certain extent. The *Krishńā* who released the *Yādhavā* clan from the tyranny of *Kamsā* and thereby enabled them to attain all good fortune and happiness, the one whose grace protected them from all dangers, the same *Krishńā* then became the victim of wrongful accusations by his own people who joined force with *Sathrājith*. They were reproaching him unabashedly, 'Isn't he the one who used to steal butter in his childhood days? Fraud and thievery are his natural qualities. He would have done this, and more.' They totally forgot how he saved them from *Kāliyā* and protected them from the deluge by holding the Govardhana hill as umbrella.

Bhagawān got upset (or acted as though he was upset) that his own people were accusing him of crimes that didn't even cross his mind. He acted as though he didn't have the omniscience befitting his *Paramāthmā* form; instead, he pretended as if he was suffering from all these misfortunes just like an ordinary human. Adopting a truly human approach, suppressing his divine capability, he decided to investigate the mystery of *Prasēnā*'s disappearance and prove his our innocence.

Krishṅā Cracked It

Krishṅā took some of *Sathrājith*'s supporters also with him and went to the same forest where *Prasēnā* had gone. They followed the trail of his horse's hoof marks. After covering quite a distance, the hoof marks didn't appear any further. The place was filled with blood stains and a few bones. They seemed to be the bones of human as well as horse. *Prasēnā*'s torn clothes were there. Pieces of his jewelry and the horse's reins and saddles were all torn and scattered. From all these clues, it was clear that some wild animal had indeed attacked both *Prasēnā* and his horse. If *Bhagawān* had arranged for attack by humans, wouldn't whole bodies have been found instead of a few pieces of bones?

But how could this be called a conclusive proof? It is quite possible that after they were killed by humans, some wild animals could have come and feasted on the bodies.

That was how the sceptical minds of the accompanying people thought. Furthermore, though broken jewelry was found and scattered, their main interest, the *Syamanthaka Maṅi*, was still missing. This strengthened their suspicion.

At that time, fortunately, *Bhagawān* noticed the signs of the lion's entry. He said, 'Let's go that way. Let's see where it leads us to. We might be able to get more clues there.' Then he led all the others and followed the track of the lion.

After a while, they found the lion's corpse. Aren't bears herbivores? Then again, even carnivores eat only herbivores such as sheep, cattle, deer, and rabbits, not other carnivores.

At the same place where the lion's corpse was lying, a bear's footprint was firmly rooted. Bears have larger feet compared to lions. Also, since bears can stand on two feet and those feet bear the whole body weight, their footprints get set quite deep in the ground. The great, strong *Jāmbavān's* footprints would be especially deep.

Therefore, *Bhagawān* and others easily followed the footprints which led them to the entrance of a cave. The cave was so dark and the pathway kept extending with no end in sight. The people were scared to go into that. Especially, they were already suspicious of *Bhagawān*. So they thought, 'Perhaps this is another deceptive ploy of his and he intends to push us into this cave and expose us to some danger.'

Krishńā's nature is such that he would encounter dangers himself without exposing others to it. He remains 'āphath Bāndhava' (Helper in distress or danger). So he ordered the others to stay at the entrance of the cave and entered it all alone. The blue radiance from his body itself guided him in the dark cave.

After a distance, all of a sudden, the center of the cave expanded into a large room with bright light. The reason for the brightness, is the *Syamanthaka Mańi*!

That large room had all the amenities of a comfortable house. In the center, there was a cradle with a baby bear lying in it. The divine *Syamanthaka Mańi* had been hung just above it as a toy for the baby.

Before all these were clearly visible, *Bhagawān* just saw some light. Along with that, he heard the sweet sound of music. On approaching closer, the song was clearly audible. A beautiful young woman was swinging the cradle and singing along.

The bears and monkeys in *Rāmāyańam* and *Bhāgavatham* stories seem to be talking and singing just like humans. Some of them, especially women, seem to even resemble humans from the way their beauty is described. Perhaps the Darwin theorists might say that it was the time when some of these creatures were approaching the human level in evolution.

The song that she was singing was not any standard lullaby. It was her own creative composition. This song detailed every aspect of the clue that *Bhagawān* came searching for. Actually, it narrated the whole event in minute detail. I can't sing, so I'll recite it as a *slōkā*.

'*Simha: Prasēnām avadhīth simho jāmbavathā hatha:* |
Sukumāraka mā rōthī thava hyēsha syamanthaka: ||

This is not in *Bhāgavatham*, but it is found in Vishn̄u *Purān̄ām* as well as *Skāndham*.

It means, 'The lion killed *Prasēnā*. Then the lion was killed by *Jāmbavān*. Oh, baby *Sukumāra*, you need not cry anymore. The syamanthaka is for you and only for you.'

Well, she thought it was 'for you and only for you.' How could she know what the *Bhagawān* was thinking?

The *Bhagawān*, just like a human, especially a 'loser' who bore the insults of all the townspeople, entered inside. He had come upon the truth that could remove all the insults.

Seeing him, the beautiful woman felt the surge of love and fear at the same time. The fear was not of him, but for him.

The Gem and the Young Woman

That woman was none other than *Jāmbavān's* daughter Jāmbavathi. She was afraid and thought, 'Father has made this cave house unapproachable to anyone. But this charming man has come here! I do not know what father might do to him in anger'

Jāmbavān was sleeping soundly at that time. So Jāmbavathi whispered to *Krishn̄ā* and asked him who he was and what the purpose of his visit was. *Bhagawān* replied her.

At once, she said, 'My father will be angry even for your having come here. If he comes to know that you want to take away the syamanthaka, it will be like pouring oil into fire. Therefore, right now, you had better remove it without making any noise and run away!'

She, of course, didn't want him to go away. However, fearing that he might be harmed by her father, she spoke thus, with a feeling of sacrifice that arose out of the love she felt for him.

Another woman who was overcome by her love of the Lord, Rukmini, sent word for him to come and take her away. But this woman sacrificed her attachment to the divine gem, the attachment that most women commonly have, and prayed to him to run away with it.

But *Bhagawān* did not observe secrecy and instead started laughing. He said, 'The title of thief that I already have is more than enough. I was just beginning to feel relieved that I could clear my name with *Sathrājith*. But, look, you are asking me to become the victim of your father's abuse. Either, let him voluntarily give me the syamanthaka, or I'll fight him directly, win and take it away.'

Jāmbavathi replied, 'I know my father's nature. True to his 'bear hold', he will never part with his possession, especially this rare gem that he has acquired for his darling baby that he has got in his old age. Therefore, if you insist on getting it in a straightforward manner, don't face defeat by asking for it. Start with the fight itself.' Her love for him had already grow so much that she started feeling a rightful share in his honour and dishonour.

Immediately, the *Paramāthmā*, who meekly accepted the insults of all the townspeople, picked up his conch and blew it majestically.

Bliss of Touch During the Fight :

Jāmbavān woke up. When he learnt of *Krishñā' s* intentions, he said, 'Oh! Is that so? You think I am just some old bear that you can easily challenge to a fight and beat? Now see what this old bear can do.' Thumping his shoulders, *Jāmbavān* leaped.

He attacked *Bhagawān* with all his might. *Bhagawān* bore it with ease and retaliated. To reveal the valor and strength of *Jāmbavān* to the world, with grace, *Bhagawān* didn't use his full power and simply gave an equal fight.

Without realizing that the one who was standing in front of him, fighting him, was indeed none other than *Rāmāchandramūrthi*, his *Mūrthi* of worship, *Jāmbavān* put up a very brave fight! Though aware of everything, without exceeding *Jāmbavān's* level and restricting himself to be an exact equal, *Bhagawān* also played the fighting game. Though he was young and *Jāmbavān* was old, he thought 'Let me see the full valor of my child by getting all his beatings, and let me enjoy the experience.'

With interlocked arms, wrestling, and rolling over, they fought. *Bhagawān*'s real intention was blessing his devotee with such divine touch. During *Rāmāvathārā* time, *Jāmbavān* was really longing for the embrace of the *Bhagawān*. But he was feeling awkward to express it. What was *Rāmā*'s body like? It was softer than silk. The very soft and gracious mind itself became the green velvety body. *Jāmbavān* couldn't bring himself to think of embracing such a soft body with his rough and furry bear body. So he kept his desire in check. Even if he had expressed his desire, despite his graceful nature, *Rāmā* wouldn't have agreed to it because, in that birth, he had dedicated his body to Sītā to be her sole property. So strict was his practice of *'Ēka pathni vrathā'* (vow to have only one wife). Even the rishis of *Dhandakārañya*, who had given up all desires, were impelled by a strong desire to embrace him the moment they set eyes on the divine, auspicious *mūrthi.* Since they were very deserving, unlike *Jāmbavān,* they didn't hesitate to express their desire. At that time, *Rāmā* said to them, 'In this *avathārā* of mine, Sītā is the only one who has a right to my body. So I will fulfill your request in my next *avathārā.*' It used to be said that these very rishis were born as gopika women during *Krishńavathārā.*

So it was for the rishis. What about the bear? *Rāmā* had made him a *Chiranjīvi* ! So he can't even take another birth like the rishis to fulfill his desire. Even now, if he realized that this *Krishńā* is none other than *Rāmā,* he would still hesitate to embrace the body that is soft as a flower with his furry bear body and would suppress his desire again. Therefore, *Bhagawān* planned that the only way to fulfill his desire is to wrestle with him in fight. Even during the human *līlās,* there are several such subtle divine intentions!

In the same way, *Parameśwarā* had blessed Arjuna with his divine touch under the guise of wrestling with him as a hunter.

Days went by. Without a clear victory or defeat, *Krishńā* and *Jāmbavān* were fighting. The *Yādhavā* folks who were waiting for a some days outside the cave thought, 'How much more can we wait around here in this forest, leaving our home? *Krishńā,* who went inside, has probably been finished off. Let's not get ourselves caught in any danger.' So they returned back to *Dwārakā.* This is the level of the gratitude of the human race.

For twenty-one days, the single combat went on in the cave. Though *Jāmbavān* was getting a bit exhausted, the touch of the body which was blue-black like a cloud was causing an inexplicable bliss that was helping him keep up the fight. After the completion of full three weeks, *Jāmbavān* could no longer manage. He was fully cognizant of the fact that his strength was derived only from the strength of the blessing from Sri *Rāmāchandramūrthi*. Therefore, just reciting '*Rāma, Rāma*', he was beating up the same *Rāmā's* next *avathārā*!

Jāmbavān thought a little. In spite of the power of *Rāmā's* blessing and the power of '*Rāmanāma*', if the opponent was able to reduce his strength, who could it be? Why was his touch so blissful?

It suddenly dawned on him.

We can also say that *Bhagawān* wanted to put an end to this game since there were so many more games yet to be played. Therefore, *Bhagawān* caused *Jāmbavān* to realize the truth.

Jāmbavān was so repentant and thought, 'Oh, what a profanity! I have beaten up my own *upāsana mūrthi*, who had come to this cave looking for me!' He fell at *Bhagawān*'s feet and sought forgiveness.

Bhagawān gracefully forgave with a pat on the bhaktha who fell at his feet and let him recover.

The Gem Resulting in Marriages

Jāmbavān said, 'I am myself your possession. Therefore, I don't possess anything that is not also yours. I surrender the syamanthaka to you, which is already yours. Along with that, please accept this *'kanyā mani'* (gem of a maiden) Jāmbavathi also.' Jāmbavathi's desire was also fulfilled; *Bhagawān* accepted her as his wife with affection along with the syamanthaka. He returned to *Dwārakā* with his new wife and the syamanthaka that would clear his name.

As the first task He gave the gem to *Sathrājith* though he had every right to keep it himself. Putting up a fight, he had recovered it from someone, who in turn fought and won it from a lion, which in turn had grabbed it from *Prasēnā*. But since *Bhagawān* didn't have any desire for materials, he was simply satisfied with the fact that he proved himself to be innocent in front of all the people. So with a generous heart, he returned the gem to *Sathrājith*. After all, he was the one who acquired it after severe thapas?

When *Sathrājith* got it back from the *Bhagawān*, it just didn't give him the bliss that a rare gift should. It was pricking his conscience. He was feeling repentant for having subjected innocent *Krishṅā* to wrongful accusations, and he was wondering what corrective action he could take.

Finally, he decided to do the same thing that *Jāmbavān* did and gave his daughter *Sathyabhāmā* in marriage to *Bhagawān*. While *Jāmbavān* had another male child, *Sathyabhāmā* was the only child of *Sathrājith*. She was *Bhūdēvi's* (Mother Earth) incarnation. Rukmini was, of course, *Srī Dēvi* (Lakshmi).

The syamanthaka first brought accusation to *Bhagawān*; then it brought him twin wives!

Just like *Jāmbavān*, *Sathrājith* also offered the *Syamanthaka Maṅi* along with the *kanyā maṅi* to *Bhagawān*, the Gopāla rathnam (gem). But he accepted only *Bhāmā* and firmly refused to accept the gem. He managed it quite nicely, saying, 'Your having it in your possession is the same as my having it in my possession.' This is because all of *Sathrājith*'s properties would be inherited by this couple, *Bhāmā* being his only child. *Sathrājith* didn't press further and kept the syamanthaka himself.

The story is not over yet. *Pil̲laiyār* isn't even involved yet!

Sathrājith thought that the gem would be with him during his lifetime and then it would pass on to his daughter and son-in-law. However, that gem would not only consume his life, but was to cause more hardships.

The Enmity Due to the Woman

Shortly after *Bhāmā's* marriage, they received word that *Krishṅa Paramāthmā's* aunt Kunthi and the *Pāndavās* were burnt alive in the wax palace. Though *Bhagawān* knew that they were indeed alive, feigning ignorance, he went to Hasthināpura to give his condolences to *Dhritharāshtra*, the elder of the family. He displayed such normal human behavior despite being an *avathārā Purushā*. His departure from *Dwārakā* resulted in a great grief for his new wife *Bhāmā*.

There was a ruffian among the *Yādhavās* called Sathathanvā. Krithavarmā and *Akrūrā* were two other important members of the *Yādhavā* clan, both very loyal to *Krishṅā*. *Akrūrā*, in particular, was a great *Bhāgavatha* (*Bhagawān*'s Bhaktha). He is the one who brought *Krishṅā* and Balarāmā from Brindhāvan to Mathurā. All these three wanted to marry *Sathyabhāmā* and had asked *Sathrājith* for her hand. *Sathrājith*, unable to decide to whom he should offer his daughter, had told each one of them that he would indeed give *Bhāmā* to him, but asked for more time, thus postponing his decision. In the mean time, due to the new twist caused by the syamanthaka, he gave her to the *Bhagawān*.

This caused strange results. Here, the *Purāṅā* depicts the crooked ways in which human minds work. All three of them had already been getting irritated with *Sathrājith* since he kept giving excuses and postponing the decision. That was the time when *Sathrājith* got suspicious of *Krishṅā* and accused him. *Akrūrā* and Krithavarmā, being on *Krishṅā's* side, openly antagonized *Sathrājith*. In the end, *Krishṅā* got the woman they were coveting; *Sathrājith* became *Krishṅā's* father-in-law; he also got the syamanthaka back from *Krishṅā*. At this turn of events, the good *Akrūrā* and Krithavarmā had a change of heart: they lost their bhakthi towards *Krishṅā*. Lust for a woman, enmity, and more basic to these is the bruised ego (when things do not go one's way) can wipe out even deep bhakthi. This is the lesson of the story.

Krishñā's departure for Hasthināpura gave *Akrūrā* and Krithavarmā opportunity to conspire. Having lost the woman, they thought they could at least rob the gem and get rid of its owner. Not having the nerve to do this by themselves, they approached the bully, Sathathanvā.

As suitors for the same woman, they should normally show enmity towards each other. However, as 'an enemy's enemy is a friend', they joined together to face their common enemy *Sathrājith*.

Krithavarmā and *Akrūrā* enticed Sathathanvā, saying, '*Sathrājith* is now without *Krishñā's* support. Therefore, go right away, finish him off, and bring the *Syamanthaka Mañi*.'

The ruffian did just that; he murdered Sahtrajith and got hold of the gem. He didn't win it in a stright fight with *Sathrājith*, but committed a lowly murder and grabbed it.

Sathyabhāmā was lamenting and waiting, wondering when her husband would return from Hasthināpura and when she could avenge her father's death and punish Sathathanvā.

Contrary to the expectation of Syamanthaka's power to destroy diseases, alleviate distress, and yield gold, all we see is calamity after calamity caused by it. Everything has a price. If you want to reap the benefits of the divine gem, the price you must pay is absolute purity, both internal and external. This is why *Sūrya Bhagawān* issued that warning. But in the case of *Sathrājith*, he kept on harboring bad thoughts towards every one, including the *Paramāthmā* on account of the gem. Such mean thoughts indicate impurity of the mind, don't they? If *Prasēnā* had to lose his life because of physical impurity, *Sathrājith* had to lose his life because of mental impurity.

The gem didn't last even with the *chiranjīvi Jāmbavān*, who fought and killed a wild animal to win it. With such a history, would it ever leave *Sathathanvā* who is cruel by nature and who robbed it by murdering its owner?

Again Victory, and Blame Again

As soon as *Krishṅā* returned to *Dwārakā*, he found his dear wife lamenting, and he resolved to avenge his father-in-law's death.

The moment Sathathanvā came to know of *Krishṅā' s* anger, he began panicking. It hadn't been long since the mighty *Jāmbavān* was defeated by him. When Sathathanvā realized that such a powerful man had turned his anger towards him, his courage abandoned him, and he ran away from *Dwārakā*.

Before running away, he dropped the syamanthaka at *Akrūrā*'s place. Had he instead given it to the *Bhagawān*, fallen at his feet, and sought forgiveness, he would have been spared; the corrupt mind plays such bad mischief. He couldn't bring himself to hand over a double victory to *Krishṅā* by turning in the gem as well as the glory of victory that *Krishṅā* would attain if he ran away. If you wonder why he didn't keep it himself, it was just his fear of the calamity that might be caused by the gem. So he wanted to pass on these mishaps tp *Akrūrā*. Also, if *Krishṅā* captured him, wouldn't he take away the gem? He utterly abhorred handing this victory to *Krishṅā*, even if it meant giving up his life. Stubbornness and rivalry will never part from evil doers. So he preferred to pass on this troublesome-gem to *Akrūrā*, who showed friendly overture, rather than see it go to *Krishṅā*, his foe. He might also have reasoned that since *Akrūrā* was reputed to be a good bhaktha and a man of intellect, he alone would be able to deter *Krishṅā* from fighting him for it.

Swāmi realized that Sathathanvā was running away. Even then, he wasn't really angry with him. Since as an *avathārā*, his duty was to establish righteousness (dharma samsthhāpana). He pretended to be angry, to punish the evil doer Sathathanvā.

As Sathathanvā was trying to flee on a very fast horse, *Bhagawān* started the chase on a chariot accompanied by Balarāmā.

The chariot horses ran fast like the wind. *Krishṅā* and Balarāmā spotted Sathathanvā's horse speeding at a distance. The poor horse couldn't keep up the gallop anymore. Exhausted and unable to run any further, it fell down and died.

Sathathanva began to run on foot. *Swāmi* also jumped out of his chariot and chased him on foot since it wouldn't be righteous to catch a man on foot using a chariot.

Balarāmā remained on the chariot since it wouldn't be righteous for two people to attack a single, exhausted opponent.

Bhagawān caught hold of Sathathanvā, and both of them dueled with each other. Who can stand against the *Bhagawān*? Sathathanvā was killed by him. However, it is a great fortune to be killed by His hands since that absolves all of one's sins. So it was indeed to bless this great sinner with *pūnyā lōka* (world of righteous people) that *Bhagawān* came on the chariot and then on foot.

Just as in *Jāmbavān's* case, *Bhagawān* became a glorious victor on account of the syamanthaka. Then again, he was also subjected to blame as before.

Bhagawān was searching all over the dead man's body for the syamanthaka. It wasn't there of course; Sathathanvā had already left it with *Akrūrā*.

In *Gītā*, *Bhagawān* says the following about himself:

'Vedhāham Sāmathīthāni varthamānāni chārjuna |
Bhāvishyāṅi cha bhūhāni mām thu vēdha na kaśchana ||'

It means, 'Hey Arjuna, I know all that had happened in the past, that is happening in the present, and that will happen in the future; yet, no one is capable of really knowing me.' This very same all-knowing person was acting out a farce, chasing Sathathanvā as though he believed that the gem was in the latter's possession! He took his elder brother also on the same pretext. The elder one, who is another *avathārā*, also went along with this farce, as though he didn't know what was happening either.

As if the accusations from the townspeople were not enough, he seems to have played this illusory game to experience even more sufferings and beatings of human life caused by the additional blame piled upon him by his own brother.

When he came back to the chariot after killing Sathathanvā, he said, 'Brother, I have killed him, but I couldn't find the gem on him.'

To go along with this illusory drama, Balarāmā had to go against him. Therefore, as soon as he heard this report from *Krishṅā*, he became furious.

He scolded *Krishṅā* indiscriminately, 'Hey *Krishṅā*, you have always been fraudulent. Even now you are hoodwinking me since you are afraid that I am going to ask for this gem. I have no doubt that you are hiding it somewhere and coming up with this story. It is not possible for straightforward people to have relationship with you and live with you.'

Even after receiving such a reproach from his own brother, without losing his patience and in all humility, the *Paramāthmā* pleaded, 'Brother, you shouldn't doubt me like this. What I am saying is absolutely true. Please go ahead and search me if you wish.'

Balarāmā's nature is such that once provoked, he doesn't cool off that easily. No explanation would register in his mind. So, in spite of all the pleas from *Krishńā*, he was not convinced. He retorted, 'What is the point of searching you? You are capable of all kinds of magic. With the blindfold-magic, you'll hide the gem. Get lost! I wouldn't like to be in your presence any more.' Yelling thus, he left for the *Vidhēhā* kingdom, instead of returning to *Dwārakā*.

Feeling dejected, *Krishńā* returned to *Dwārakā*. Adding more insult to injury, again he was subjected to more accusations by the townspeople. Hearing the people say, 'Driven by his greed for the gem, he has gone so far as to antagonize his own brother and chased him out of the country', he felt greatly hurt.

In general, people tend to dwell on others' shortcomings and criticize them for it, rather than appreciating their merits. Even those of us who read the newspapers and discuss public matters seem to show more taste in harshly critiquing the opposing party than commending our own favorite leaders. The tendency to enjoy criticizing others seems to be have prevailed even in the olden days as revealed by these purānic stories.

Akrūrā and the Gem

Akrūrā was overcome with anxiety upon *Krishńā*'s return to *Dwārakā*. He had always wanted to be close to *Krishńā*, the one who bestows grace and protection. The same *Akrūrā* now feared him and did not want to be anywhere near him! So he left *Dwārakā*. True to *Āchāryā's* words ('artham anartham'), this is how material possessions become disastrous.

Despite this unwise fear and suspicion, *Akrūrā*'s natural inclination for *Īswarā* Bhakthi and noble mind didn't desert him. Therefore, instead of wandering aimlessly, he started on a pilgrimage after leaving *Dwārakā* and eventually reached *Kāśi*.

Upon reaching *Kāśi*, once again his mind became pure with no trace of evil. He didn't have any selfish desire to use the gem for any personal gain. Therefore, the syamanthaka started yielding the eight 'bhāra' measure of gold every day. Without even thinking of using this for himself or his family, *Akrūrā* was establishing several temples in *Kāśi* and performing service to God.

The divine gem considered him clean, both internally and externally. So, in addition to the daily gold, it kept his surroundings free from disease, grief, excessive rains, drought, or any other hardships, and generated overall welfare.

Reason for the Blame and Accusations :

Pondering over the various incidents, *Bhagawān* was feeling miserable in *Dwārakā*. He was thinking, 'Oh, how many hardships have been caused by this syamanthaka! It has taken *Prasēnā*, *Sathrājith*, and Sathathanvā as its toll. First it earned me the accusation from *Sathrājith*. Now it has made my own brother misunderstand me and leave the country. Since *Akrūrā* has also disappeared, I am inclined to guess that he is the one who has carried the gem away. Again, depriving this city of this good soul's presence is also that syamanthaka's effect. Through the death of her father, it has caused a tremendous grief to *Sathyabhāmā*. The entire town is suspicious of me. Why all these hardships? Why am I subjected to all these wrongful accusations again and again?'

Just then, *Nāradā* Maharishi came. He knows when and where to show up, and he can cause an interesting turn in a story.

He addressed the *Bhagawān*, '*Swāmi*! You seem to be engulfed in some worry. What is the reason?'

Bhagawān recounted all the hardships caused by the syamanthaka. The great Paramāthmā, with utter humility, then inquired, 'Why am I receiving all these wrongful accusations again and again? You are a dēva rishi. There is nothing that you don't know. You alone must dispel these perplexities and tell me the reason.'

Nāradā replied, 'Oh, that! I'll tell you. You happened to see the fourth phase crescent moon on a waxing period during the month of *Bhādhrapadhā*. Therefore, due to *Vignēswarā 's* curse, you became subjected to wrongful accusations.'

Bhādhrapadham: differences in Panchāngam :

*Bhādhra*Padham is a twin star; they are called *Pūrva Bhādhra*Padham and Uththara *Bhādhrapadham*. They are sometimes also called *Prōshtapadham*. In general, when referring to a month in which the full moon appears closest to one of these stars, it is called *Bhādhrapadham*, and when referring to the star itself, it is called *Prōshtapadham*. *Pūrva Prōshtapadhī* evolved into '*Pūrattadhī*', and Uththara *Prōshtapadhi* evolved into '*Uththarattadhī*'. However, the month *Prōshtapadhī*, in which the full moon falls on the star *Prōshtapadhi*, evolved in a different way and ended up as '*purattāsī*' (in tamil).

However, this *Purattāsi*, as well as the other eleven months that are also named after stars like this, isn't very regular about having the moon appear closest to it on its respective full moon days. Sometimes, this phenomenon occurs a month early or a month late. The reason is as follows. Even though our months are called Chitra, *Visākam, Kārthikam*, etc., named after the respective stars that appear closest on their full moon days, in reality the first day of the month is determined according to the time when the sun enters one of the zodiacal constellations corresponding to that month. This solar position is totally unrelated to the lunar position with respect to a star. This type of month that is based on the solar position is called *'sowra mānam'*, and this is the system that is followed in *Tamil Nādu*.

In Karnataka, Andhra, and most of North India, the *'chāndhra mānam'* system is followed. In this system, the day after *Amāvāsya* (new moon) is the first day of a month. Since this is all based on lunar position, the month bearing a particular star name does correspond to the month in which the full moon appears closest to the same star.

All the festivals are determined according to the *chāndhra māna* month. Therefore, *Pil̲laiyār* Chathurthi, which is supposed to come in *Bhādhrapadhā* month on the chathurthi thithi (fourth phase moon) in the śukla paksha (waxing period) will always come in *Bhādhrapadhā* month for the followers of chāndhra māna. For Tamilians, however, *Pil̲laiyār* Chathurthi might come in *Purattāsi* or *āvaṇi*. The reason is that their Chithrā month begins on the very next day of our Panguni (Phalgun) *Amāvāsya*. The same scheme follows for every month thereafter, and the day after our *āvaṇi Amāvāsya*, their *Purattāsi (Bhadhrapadham)* will begin. On the chathurthi day, which comes four days after *Amāvāsya*, the sun might not have entered the *Kanyā Rāsi* (Virgo constellation) yet - and this happens to be the case most of the time. In such years, *Pil̲laiyār* Chathurthi comes in *āvaṇi* itself for us since our *Purattāsi* begins only when the sun enters the Kanyā Rāsi.

Similarly, Sri Rāma Navami always comes in Chithrā month for chāndhra māna followers, while we have it in Panguni sometimes and Chithrā other times. While we may have Gokulāshtami in 'ādi' or *'āvaṇi'* and *Navarātri* in *Purattāsi* or Aippasi, their Gokulāshtami will always come in *Śrāvaṇa* month on *Krishṇā* paksha ashtami (eighth day of the waning period), and their *Navarātri* will always come in āswina month on the first nine days of śukla paksha (waxing period).

I have been explaining all this to make a point that it is this *chāndhra māna Bhādhrapadhā śukla* chathurthi that *Nāradā* was referring to.

This is the very same day of *Pil̲laiyār* Chathurthi.

Krishṅā happened to see the moon on one such day. You might remember what that day was. Yes, it was that same fateful day when he went hunting with *Prasēnā*, then got separated from him, and then, after a long search, looked up at the sky, and, realizing that the moon had risen, returned back to town.

Nāradā informed him that this act of his glancing at the moon on a ŝukla chathurthi day caused *Vignēŝwarā* *'s* curse to take effect, and hence the wrongful accusations.

Hearing this, the *Bhagawān* asked, 'Why did *Vignēŝwarā* pronounce such a curse that misfortune should befall anyone who glances at the moon on a ŝukla chathurthi?'

Nāradā began to narrate this story in great detail.

Question and Answer: Story Within Story

Presenting a story in the form of someone's answer in response to someone else's question is a typical mode of narration in *Purāṅās*. Generally, most of the *Purāṅās* are composed as the answers given by the *Sūtha* in response to the questions posed by the rishis of *Naimiŝāraṅyam*. Within this overall format, each *Purāṅā* encapsulates another level of a more detailed narration as the answers given by some specific person in response to another person's questions. For instance, the *Bhāgavatha Purāṅā*, which was taught by the *Sūtha* to the rishis of *Naimiaŝa*, is received in the form of Sri *Ŝukā's* words as taught to *Parīkshith*. If you look at the *īthihāsās*, *Rāmāyaṅa* starts with *Nāradā*'s recitation of *Rāmachāritha* (*Rāmā*'s biography) in response to *Vālīki* Maharishi's question, 'Who is the one that possesses all the exalted qualities?' It then presents it as Vālmēki's elaboration of the same, as taught to the children Lava and kucha as the *Rāmāyaṅa* Kāvya (epic), who then sang it in front of *Rāmā* in the of *Aŝwamedha Mahā Mantapa*. Again, *Mahābhāratā* was narrated to the rishis of *Naimiŝa* by *Sūtha*. Only the *Rāmāyaṅa*, honored as the *Ādhi Kāvya* (first epic), does not have any connection to the rishis of *Naimiśārañya*. The story of *Mahābhāratā* was narrated in the form of *Vaiśampāyanā's* words as instructed to *Jānamējaya*, the grandson of the *Pāndavās*, and then composed as an epic by Vyāsa while *Vignēśwarā* scribed it.

Occurring here and there within such big, main narration, are some questions posed by different characters that are answered by rishis like *Nāradā*, *Agasthyā*, and *Mārkañdēya* in the form of *upākhyānams*. For instance, in the Uththara Kānda of the *Rāmāyaña*, all the stories of the *Rāvanā* clan are presented as *Agasthyā*'s recounting to *Rāmā*. The *Lalithōpākhyānam* from the *Brahmāñda Purāñā* is Lord *Hayagrīva's* response to *Agasthyā*'s question. In *Mahābhāratā*, several such *upākhyānams* are included that were narrated to the *Pāndavās* by various rishis, especially during the *Pāndavās*' exile in the forest. Similarly, this story that *Nāradā* recounted in response to *Krishñā Paramāthmā' s* question of why it is not proper to see the chathurthi moon, appears in *Skāndham*. This is given in final form as *Nandhikēśwarā's* response to *SanathKumārā* with the added details of *Krishñā' s* question to *Nāradā*.

Moon's Pride Shattered :

Riding on his *mūshika* (mouse), *Mahāgañapathi* happily tours all the worlds. During one such excursion, he visited the *Chandhra lōka* (Lunar world). The one named *'Śaśivarña'* went to 'Śaśi's' (moon's) world. Aren't all children attracted by the moon?

Moon is very proud of his beauty. Even the *Bhagawān* is described by poets as the one whose face resembles the full moon. His ego reached new heights because of this. When one gets caught up in self-admiration, other worthy objects of admiration will appear lowly to him. Similarly, when Moon caught sight of

Pil̲laiyār's beautiful and charming child-form, he could only think of it as fit for ridicule.

His elephant face brimming with peace, love, and wisdom, his broad ears that sway like a fan, the chubby child's potbelly, his cute, tiny legs; all of these stir up our admiration and joy and make us wonder if there is a comparable beauty anywhere else. On the contrary, Moon thought condescendingly, 'What is this? Ugly trunk, platter-like ear, pot-like belly, and disproportionate legs!' The very same things that are highly exalting to the *bhakthās* seem lowly and laughable to others. When he saw *Pil̲laiyār*, Moon laughed at him and made fun of him.

Immediately, *Pil̲laiyār* got angry, anger as a result of his divine responsibility to check and punish unrighteous behavior, not anger rising from bruised ego.

Pil̲laiyār addressed Moon furiously.

'Hey, Moon! With a soft white glow, your appearance is soothing and cool to the eyes, and poets all sing your praise. You are letting all of this get to your head. Is that soft white glow really your own? Aren't you shining with the light borrowed from the sun? You seem to have forgotten that those parts of your own world that do not receive this light are still appearing as dark, ugly patches.

'Let alone that. If character is more important than looks, what is your take on that? Your character blemish is no less than your physical blemish. Because of this character blemish, you played favorites among your wives. As a result, you earned your father-in-law's curse and started waning little by little every day. (Moon, who married the twenty-seven star maidens, favored only *Rohiṇī* and ignored the others. Therefore, Dhaksha, his father-in-law, cursed him.) After that, it was my father who picked you up in that emaciated third-phase crescent form, placed you on his own head, and gave back your status. Furthermore, saving you from disappearing all together by this waning phenomenon, he enabled you to regain your form little by little. Still, he thought that your deceit towards your wives, who came trusting you as their dēvatā, didn't deserve a full pardon. To serve as a constant reminder of your misbehavior to the world, he ordained that you should start waning again as soon as you grow to your full form. This made you alternate between the waxing and the waning phases, alternating the display of his grace and your lack of character. No one has forgotten this offence of yours or that of your misbehavior towards the wife of your very guru. No one looks up to you for your character. They are simply gazing at you for the enjoyment of your coolness to the eyes and the white glow that you have smeared on yourself.

'From now on, no one will look at you even for the appreciation of your physical form. I hereby curse you to that effect. People who look at your blemished form will become objects of blemish themselves. They will be subjected to wrongful accusation.' So saying, he pronounced the curse.

The Curse's Implication

The biggest punishment for those who are vain, taking excessive pride in beauty and decked-up appearance, is to make everyone ignore them and deprive them of the others' attention. This is why *Pillaiyār* pronounced such a curse on Moon. Instead of cursing him with an impairment that affected him directly, such as 'your eyes will be blinded' or 'you will become a stone', he cursed that those who see him will bear the blame. This is more effective because every time someone is afflicted with this misfortune, they will think, 'I got into this predicament because of looking at this loser, Moon', and will curse him in turn with frustration'?

We might also add another possible motivation for this curse. *Pillaiyār* might have done this to curtail the common tendency to hero-worship and play favorites towards a person who has attractive looks or authority, however low his character may be.

The proper punishment for someone who is too proud of his looks is to ignore him. The fitting punishment for those who ignore the character flaws and flatter just the looks of someone is to receive an accusation that is caused by a perceived flaw in their own character.

Moon was overcome by humiliation and fear; nobody would bother to look at him any more. Even if someone did look by chance, because of the misfortunes resulting from *Pillaiyār's* curse, they would heap more curses on him. Tormented by these feelings, Moon hid himself inside the very ocean from which he had come.

Relief from the Curse

The world suffered during nights in the absence of the moon. Deprived of the moon's glow, which they need for their growth, all the herbs had wilted away, causing diseases to spread everywhere. People who used to enjoy the beauty of the milky white moonshine were feeling down.

Sympathizing with the world, all of the dēvās and rishis approached *Brahmā* and appealed to him.

It is customary to first approach *Brahmā*, the first of the thri-*mūrthis (Brahmā, Vishṅu, and Śiva)* for any plea. Quite often, he will rectify the problems himself. When the problem warrants a highly significant solution, he will take them to Vishṅu, *Īśwarā*, or *Ambāl*, and appeal to them. This is how it is depicted in the *Purāṅās*.

When the dēvās and rishis appealed to *Brahmā* to let Moon roam the skies again, he said, 'How can I release the curse given by the great *Mahāgaṅapathī*? Even *Paramēswarā* is incapable of doing that. Therefore, go worship the very same person who pronounced the curse. Fall at his feet and pray. Observe the 'naktha vratham' on his propitious day, the chathurthi thithi, and perform a special *pūjā*. Offer plenty of mōdhakam, appam, fruits, and coconut with prayer that will melt his heart and earn his benediction.'

In general, a *vrathā* (vow) is usually observed by restricting meals to daytime and fasting at night. However, this is reversed for some *vrathās*, fasting during the day and taking meals at night. Such *vrathās* that call for fasting, *pūjā*, and recitations during the day and completed with a meal at night are called 'naktha *vrathās*'. 'Naktham' means night. The term 'nocturnal' is derived from this root.

There is something important for each deity. For Śiva, it is *abhishēkam* (ritual bath); for Vishṅu, it is decoration; for *Pillaiyār*, it is naivēdhhyam (food offering). A child always goes after food. With no concern about whether it will fit into the mouth, whether it is harmful, or even whether it is edible, a child tries to put anything in its mouth. We even try to appease the child with sweet snacks to distract its attention from its mischief. Therefore, for *Pillaiyār*, the child deity, we should offer a sumptuous *neivēdhyam*. Even *Avvaiyār* begins her prayer invocation with the mention of food. Similarly, Thiruppugazh mentions food items in the opening stanza!

Following *Brahmā*'s advice, all the *dēvās* performed *pūjā* to *Pillaiyār* with mind, body, and speech in control. After locating Moon under the ocean, they urged him, 'You must realize your fault and seek forgiveness. That is more significant than our *pūjā*. Then *Vignēswarā* will also be softened and will bestow his grace.'

Humiliation and misery sometimes infuse a bit of wisdom and teach a good lesson to arrogant people.

Moon came out with a more purified and refined mind, well-conditioned by his miserable experience. He joined the dēvās and worshipped *Vignēśwarā* with humility.

Ganēśā, the personification of grace, appeared before them. He lent his ears to their plea - his big ears! His ears are referred to as '*sūrpa karrīam*' (sūrpam means a big platter).

Full of remorse, Moon pleaded for forgiveness. With a big heart, *Pi*l*l*a*iyār* forgave him.

He retracted the curse that subjected the onlookers of Moon to wrongful accusation - with one minor condition. He said, 'The reason for leaving a condition instead of a complete retraction is that a word that comes out of my mouth cannot go in vain. Also, Moon should suffer at least a minor consequence to serve as a cautionary reminder to the people that vanity based on one's looks, knowledge, wealth, and power will only bring him down to the humiliation of being ignored by everyone. Therefore, I ordain just one day, the day of my manifestation, which is the śukla paksha chathurthi, to be the day on which no one should look at Moon. Those who disobey this ordinance will be subjected to wrongful accusations.'

With abundant grace, he changed the curse from prohibiting anyone from ever looking at Moon to having this restriction just on one day each month. Designating this day to be the śukla chathurthi also enables people to remember his connection with it.

Bhālachandhran

In addition to reducing the punishment this much, *Pi*l*l*a*iyār* also sanctioned a few privileges to Moon with a very kind heart. The highest of those privileges was that he placed the crescent moon on his own crown.

Just like *Paramēśwarā*, both *Ambā*l and *Vignēśwarā* also have the crescent moon on their head.

This is how *Pi̲l̲laiyār* earned the name 'Bālachandhra'. This name even earned a place in his *shōdaśa* nāmās (sixteen most significant names of *Pi̲l̲laiyār*). A lot of people erroneously think that it is 'Bāla Chandhra', meaning child-Moon. It is not 'Bā', 'Bhā' is the correct pronunciation. Out of the four sounds of 'pa', 'pha', 'ba', 'bha' from Sanskrit, the fourth sound, 'bha' should be used and it should be pronounced 'Bhāla Chandhra'. 'Bhālam' means forehead. One who is wearing Moon on his forehead is 'Bhāla Chandhra'. We can also use the second sound 'pha' and say 'Phāla'. If this pronunciation is used, it denotes the hair on one side of the parting. In several sculptures and pictures, we see that *Īśwarā* is holding Moon slightly tilted to the left side on his lock of hair instead of straight up. There, *Paramēśwarā* appears as 'Phāla Moon'. But the name 'Bhāla Chandhra' is mainly associated with *Pi̲l̲laiyār*.

Considering that Moon didn't directly offend *Īśwarā*, his being forgiven by *Paramēśwarā* is not so significant. He only wronged his own wives, for which he was punished. He then sought forgiveness, and *Paramēśwarā* forgave him.

On the other hand, Moon caused a direct offense to *Pi̲l̲laiyār*; he made fun of him directly. So it is very magnanimous of *Pi̲l̲laiyār* to have forgiven him under those circumstances.

When someone is overly praised or flattered, we say, 'What's the matter? You are dancing around, carrying so and so on your head.' Here, *Gaṅapathi*, because of the sympathy he felt for Moon, literally put him on his head and danced ecstatically, despite his earlier offence. He is also called *'Nriththa Gaṅapathi'* and *'Kūththādum Pi̲l̲laiyār'* (*Kūththū* in tamil means dance)

Both the elephant and the moon share the honor of being considered 'never satiating, however long you look at them'. Now one was sitting on the other, mutually enhancing each other's beauty!

Šankatahara Chathurthi

(Pil̲l̲aiyār bestowed another honor upon Moon)

Each deity is usually associated with a thithi of some special significance. However, a thithi occurs twice in a month, once during the waxing and again during the waning period. Only one of these 'thithis' is associated with a particular deity. For *Murugā*, it is šukla *shashti*, and not *Krishña shashti*. For *Paramēšwarā*, it is *Krishña* chathurdhasi, which is also called *Māsa Šivaratri*. For *Rāmā*, it is šukla navami, and for *Krishñā*, it is *Krishña* paksha ashtami. (Both the dark *Krishñā* and the white Šiva have *Krishña* paksha thithis.) For *Ambāl̲*, it is *pūrñima* (full moon), which occurs only in šukla paksha. However, *Pil̲l̲aiyār* is the only deity who has the unique honor of being associated with both *Krishña* paksha as well as šukla paksha chathurthi.

He manifested only on šukla chathurthi. Therefore, *Pil̲l̲aiyār* Chathurthi, the most elaborate celebration for him, is indeed in šukla paksha. The šukla chathurthi *vrathā* is also observed in all other months. In addition, there is 'šankata harā chathurthi *vrathā*'. 'šankata harā' means 'destroying hurdles'. (But leaving out 'hara', the important word, some people say 'šankata chathurthi'!) This is another *vrathā*, again observed as a prayer to *Vignēšwarā* . This is the *Krishña* paksha chathurthi, not the šukla chathurthi.

Pil̲l̲aiyār himself established this šankata harā chathurthi, and that was precisely at this time of pardoning Moon. Even the reduced sentence, which prohibits seeing him on šukla chathurthi, was too harsh for *Pil̲l̲aiyār's* benevolent heart. To compensate for even this mild censure, he wanted everyone to honor Moon on *Krishña* paksha chathurthi. So he proclaimed, 'If you worship me on *Krishña* chathurthi while observing the *vrathā*, I will be especially gratified and remove all hurdles. You must conclude this *pūjā* with an additional *pūjā* to Moon along with *Rohiñi*.'

Pil̲l̲aiyār's graceful heart was so softened as to pardon even Moon's special favours to *Rohiñi*.

Krishñā and Moon

Gokulāshtami *pūjā* for *Krishñā* also honours Moon; at the conclusion of this *pūjā*, it calls for an offering of arghyam (water oblation offered to gods or venerable persons) to Moon. When taken together with the context of this story, it appears that *Krishñā* established this procedure to honor Moon, conforming to *Vignēśwarā 's* line of thinking.

There is yet another related story. When *Rāmā* took birth in the solar dynasty, earning him the names of 'Ravi kula thilaka' and 'Ina kula thilaka', thus honoring *Sūrya*, Moon was feeling downcast and left out. He approached *Rāmā* and cried, 'how come you have just ignored me!' *Rāmā* immediately reassured him saying, 'Don't cry! I'll annex your name with mine. I'll make sure that my name goes in the gazette itself only as *Rāmachandrah* from now on! If this is still not enough, in my next incarnation, I'll come down in your own dynasty.' That is why he took *Krishñāvathara* in lunar dynasty. As an additional privilege, he ordered this arghyam offering to Moon as part of the *pūjā* performed to celebrate his birth.

Boon to Clear the Blame

Vighnēśwarā bestowed yet another honor on Moon. In addition to granting him a special honor on *śankatahara* chathurthi day, he designated the day before the prohibited chathurthi as a very auspicious day to see Moon. He declared, '*Pūnyā* (good *karmā*) will accrue to those who see Moon on the first thithi after amavasya on which he is clearly visible; this will even neutralize the blemish of seeing him on chathurthi.'

The third phase of the moon satisfies this condition. It is the very same third phase crescent that is worn by *Īśwarā*, *Pil̲l̲aiyār*, and *Ambāḻ* on their heads. On the day after *Amāvāsya* (prathama thithi) the moon will not be visible enough to be identified. Only on dhvithiya thithi, it will be visible. That day is also specified as 'Moon *darśanam*' in the panchangam. In practice, we are actually avoiding seeing the moon on the night before chathurthi, which is the fourth phase, counting *Amāvāsya* as the first phase. There is even a saying that says, 'if you see the fourth phase of the moon, you will suffer like a dog.'

After *Piḻḻaiyār* granted this curse-retraction, Moon resumed his stroll on the sky. Everyone, including himself, was pleased once again.

After narrating this story of Moon and *Vignēśwarā* , *Nāradā* told *Krishṅā*, 'You actually saw Moon on the most significant chathurthi day, which is the Bhādhrapada śukla chathurthi. Since you are subjecting yourself to all human constraints while in the human form, this curse of *Vignēśwarā* has affected you. That is why you are being blamed by all these townspeople. As a remedy, observe the chathurthi *vrathā* and perform the *Mahāgaṅapathi pūjā*.'

Krishṅā faithfully followed this advice and performed the *pūjā* with strict adherence to all the rules; he did not take a light-hearted attitude that it was after all just his nephew. We might as well assume that he observed this *vrathā* on both śukla as well as *Krishṅa* paksha chathurthis. Otherwise, we might start wondering which one is superior and whether we can follow just that one and not the other, and so on.

Vignēśwarā , the Śuklāmbaradharam, appeared before *Krishṅā* and said, 'My curse had to affect you since you have taken a human form and are guiding them with your human behavior as a role model. Very soon, your wrongful accusation will be cleared and you will shine like the moon that glides out of the clouds.' This was the boon that the nephew gave to his uncle!

Benefit of Līlā : Welfare of the World

At once, *Krishn̄ā* put in another request to *Pil̲l̲aiyār*. The welfare of the world is always on *Krishn̄ā' s* mind. Just as algae can temporarily cover some pure, divine water, he allowed his supreme mind to be temporarily overwhelmed by his personal misfortune resulting from the accusations. However, now that it was completely resolved, his concern for the world immediately took over. So he requested *Vignēśwarā* , 'It is magnanimous of you to have appeared right before me and cleared my problem. However, the benefit of your appearance should not be limited to me alone. You should utter something auspicious that would benefit all mankind.'

Pil̲l̲aiyār preferred to do just that. He had been thinking along the same lines. Earlier, he had cursed all mankind on account of Moon. He wanted to take this opportunity to make amends for it and reward mankind on account of *Krishn̄ā*.

So he pronounced a decree: 'I have already given an antidote to the unavoidable blemish that results from viewing the śukla chathurthi Moon. It is the viewing of the same Moon when he is first visible after a New Moon. Since this remedy will only be available after a full month elapses let me sanction a quick remedy which will also serve to remind the people of you (*Krishn̄ā*). Just reading or listening to this tale of the *Syamanthaka Man̄i*, by which you have also glorified me, is sufficient to instantly clear the blemish of the wrongful accusation. In fact, if this is recited or listened to right after seeing the chathurthi Moon, the blemish will be cleared that very instant. This includes even the most important *Bhādhrapadha Mahā* Chathurthi, the day of my manifestation itself. Even that enormous blemish will be cleared by this upākhyāna; not only that, it will clear any kind of mental disturbance, and provide peace and clarity.'

This is how even the trials and tribulations suffered by the divine incarnations end up benefiting the world. Whatever their *līlā*, ultimately it results in the welfare of the world.

One Slōkā is Enough

There is yet another way, which is even simpler, to clear the wrongful accusations resulting from the blemish of seeing the fourth-phase moon during the waxing period. If reciting the entire syamanthaka upākhyāna is difficult, at least meditate on this story. While meditating on it, at least one particular *slōkā* from it must be recited. It is the very same *slōkā* that was sung by Jāmbavathi as a lullaby to the baby *Sukumāra*, the key *slōkā* that revealed all the sequence of events to the *Bhagawān*, who was trying to solve the mystery of the *Syamanthaka Mañi* (as if he didn't know).

simha: Prasēnām avadhīth simho jāmbavathā hathah: |
Sukumāraka mā rōthīh thava hyēsha syamanthaka: ||

Actually, as this *slōkā* is recited, this whole upākhyāna will automatically come to memory in some order. The second line makes us feel as though we are ourselves being consoled. '*Sukumār*aka mā *rōthīh* - Don't cry, little baby *Sukumāra*!' Though it is actually referring to *Jāmbavān's* child named *Sukumāra*, since '*Sukumāra*' means 'good child', it is also applicable to us. *'thava hyēsha syamanthaka: - māñi* is for you and only you!' The *Pil̲laiyār māñi* and *Krishña mañi* are both for us and only us! While we have their grace, we need not cry on account of anything.

The *'Vrathā Choodāmāñi Kalpam'*, which details the ways in which *vrathās* must be observed, says that this *slōkā* must be recited as part of the *pūjā*.

Accusation Cleared

True to *Pil̲laiyār's* boon conferred on *Krishña Paramāthmā*, the blame that was weighing with him was removed in just a short time. Here is that story.

Dwārakā experienced a drought all of a sudden. At the same time, word was received that *Kāśi* was enjoying greater prosperity day by day. News was also received that *Akrūrā* was at *Kāśi* and was performing a large number of temple services. It was clear that the syamanthaka must be with *Akrūrā* and that the prosperity was indeed the result of its power.

Bhagawān, who is Sarvajna (all knowing), doesn't really need any news report. Yet he was conducting everything strictly conforming to his human drama. That is why he acted as though this inference was drawn from the news they received, and he responded by sending a messenger to *Akrūrā*.

He sent the following message: 'Dhwārakā has not been the same without your good self. Therefore you must come back immediately and take your place as the elder of the Yadhu clan. It is quite all right even if the syamanthaka is with you. *Sathrājith* is no more. He doesn't have any male heir either. *Sathyabhāmā* is mourning only her father and is unconcerned about the syamanthaka. Therefore, instead of its being in someone else's possession, it is quite fitting with you, who are of virtuous conduct. (Though he himself had every right and qualification to keep it, the *Bhagawān* sent this message without a trace of such a claim.) However, my elder brother has developed suspicions about me regarding this syamanthaka. When he developed such doubts, Jāmbavathi might be the next to develop some suspicions. She might think that the gem is indeed with me; since *Sathrājith* was its first recipient through his thapas, she might suspect that I am probably hiding it with the ulterior motive of passing it on to his daughter. *Bhāmā*, on the other hand, might think that I probably feel that the gem belongs to *Jāmbavān* since he conquered it by fighting and killing the lion, and therefore I am hiding it to pass it on to his daughter Jāmbavathi. Therefore, to remove their suspicion and the people of *Dwārakā* as well, you should make a public disclosure that the gem is indeed with you and then continue to live here itself in peace. This will also help restore the prosperity of our land, which is afflicted with drought right now.'

While expressing true love and regard, the message contains some diplomacy as well!

Though afflicted by some mental confusion in between, *Akrūrā* was innately a great *Bhāgavathā* (devotee of *Bhagawān*). Upon receiving the *Bhagawān*'s call, his original bhakthi swelled up and he went running to *Dwārakā* and fell at the *Bhagawān*'s feet.

Though the *Bhagawān* had said, 'you keep it', *Akrūrā* really thought, 'The entire wealth belongs only to *Lakshmīpathi* (Lord of the goddess of wealth). It has been a great sin and a sacrilege to have hidden this gem from him, that too by smuggling it out of the kingdom.'

Therefore he humbly returned the syamanthaka to the *Bhagawān* himself.

Bhagawān was even more persistent and said, 'Consider this as a present from me. Is it proper for you to refuse something that I give with such affection? All I need is the retraction of the accusation on me and *Dwārakā* to be rid of its afflictions and become prosperous once again by the presence of the great gem. That's all.' Thus, he ordained that *Akrūrā* should keep the syamanthaka himself.

He was the creator of *Dwārakā*; he anointed Ugrasēnā *Mahā*rājā as its king; he was the exalted leader of the Yadhu clan. All these gave him a prominent position in public life. People in high positions should conduct themselves in an exemplary manner, beyond suspicion, not only for the sake of their own personal honor, but also to prevent the society from getting corrupted. They should even be ready to show proof for such exemplary conduct – As the English saying goes, 'Caesar's wife must be above suspicion'. It is only for this reason that the *Bhagawān* was working so hard to clear the wrongful accusation on him, not because of any genuine worry about his self image! To keep the true theatrical flavor of his drama, he acted along as though he truly suffered.

The display of *Dwārakā*'s afflictions as a result of the gem's absence and the resumption of its prosperity on its return, is a part of this drama as well. When *Dwārakā* enjoys the presence of the *Bhagawān*, the storehouse of all that is auspicious, does it really need the gem for its prosperity'. *Dwārakā*'s drought was simply ordained by Him as the effect of some karmā of its people. Later, it was just His will to end it and bless them with prosperity. He simply used the syamanthaka to fit into this *līlā*.

As per the *Bhagawān*'s instruction, *Akrūrā* settled down in *Dwārakā* keeping the syamanthaka with him.

People realized the truth. The blemish that was heaped on the *Bhagawān* was cleared.

Balarāmā also came back from the kingdom of *Vidhēhā* when he was informed that *Krishñā* did not rob the gem, that it was indeed with *Akrūrā*, and *Akrūrā* was living in *Dwārakā* with the gem, causing *Dwārakā* it to prosper once again. He felt much remorse for suspecting *Krishñā* and expressed his regrets.

Krishña Paramāthmā said, 'This is not the fault of any of you. The sole reason for all this is my fault of viewing at the chathurthi Moon. It is all for good - After all, doesn't this whole episode serve to reveal the glory of *Vignēśwarā* ?'

This is the story of how *Krishña Paramāthmā* also worshipped *Vignēśwarā* and got his blessings.

Significance of the Jayanthis (Manifestation)

The Tamils, who follow the *sowramāna panchānga*, are quite fortunate since both *Gokulāshtami (Krishñā's Jayanthi)* and

Pil̲l̲aiyār Chathurthi (Pil̲l̲aiyār's Jayanthi) fall in the month of *āvaṇi* itself most of the time. For others, *Gokulāshtami* comes in *Śrāvaṇa* month and *Vināyakā Chathurthi* comes in *Bhādhrapadha* month.

It is in *āvaṇi* that cucumber is harvested in abundance. A specialty of cucumber is that it is the only 'sāthvic' indigenous vegetable that can be eaten just raw, without cooking. Both *Krishṇā* and *Pil̲l̲aiyār* captivate our hearts with the *līlās* of their tender years. Cucumber, which is savored in its tender form, is aptly available in plenty during their jayanthi. We are also tender (immature) in spiritual development. We should offer the tender cucumber as *nivēdhanam* in their *jānānōthsava pūjā* and eat them as *prasādam*. Both of them will bless us to be cool as the tender cucumber.

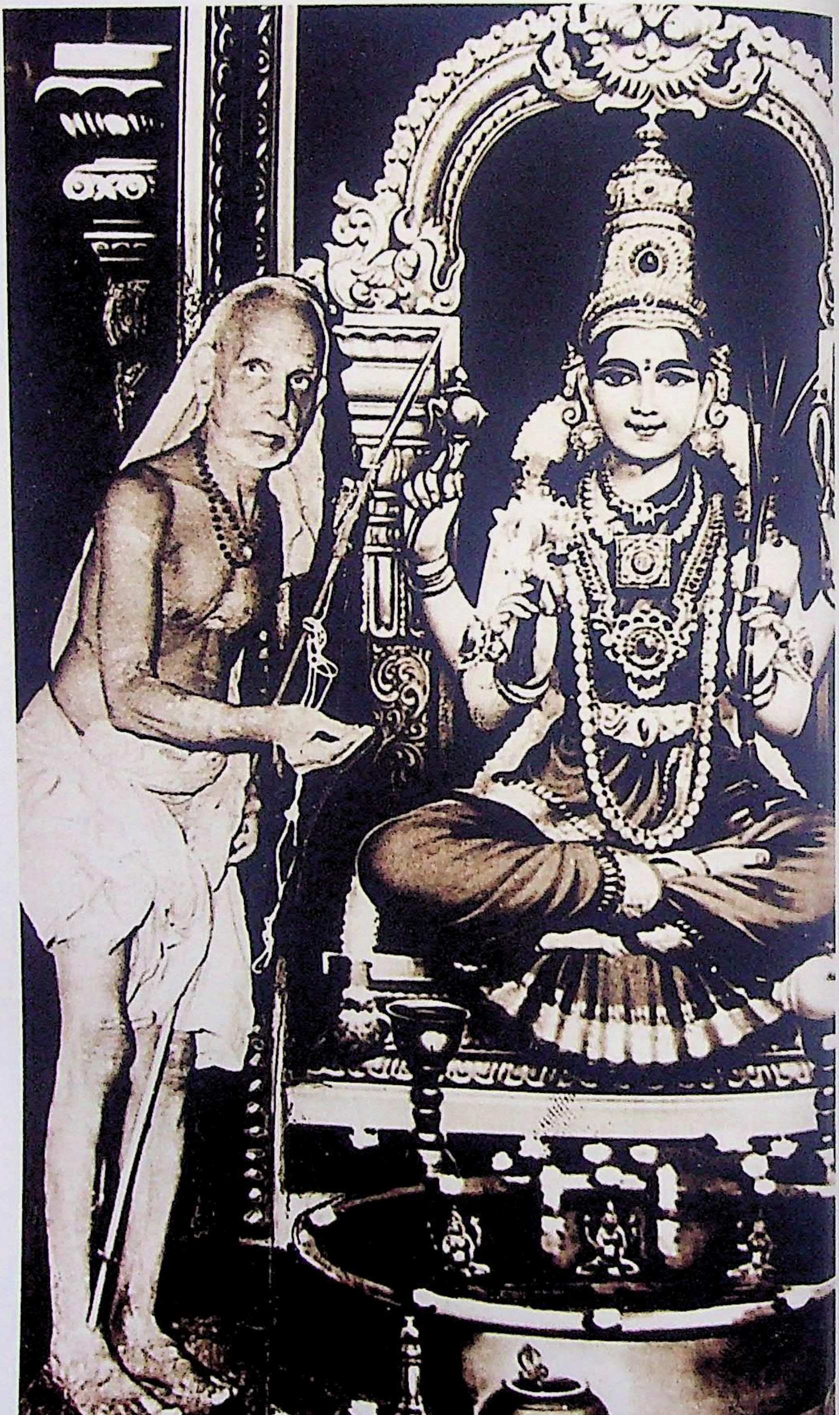
Conclusion

As we saw in these narrations, *Pil̲l̲aiyār* is not only a child of high place, but on various occasions, he has also acted as a elder to even the elders of his family such as his father, mother, and uncle.

Let us also worship with love and reverence this elder, who was worshipped for removal of hurdle and victory by *Paramēśwarā*, *Lalithāmbikā*, and *Rāmā*, worshipped for fulfilment of love by *Subrahmaṇya*, and by *Krishṇa Paramāthmā* for removal of accusation. For removing various hurdles we face in our life is struggles, securing victory, as well as getting rid of our shortcomings, blemishes, and disrepute, let us worship Him, who acted as elder to those mighty *dēvatās* even as an adorable, little child.

* * *

GURU



GURUKULAM, GHATIKĀSTHĀNAM

Guru, Āchāryā, Vādhyār

The terms Guru and *āchāryā* are used at a higher level. The term vādhyār is used for anyone who teaches something. *Āchāryā* denotes a person who conducts more significant rituals such as the formal imparting of a manthra with 'dīksha', initiating a *pūjā*, and officiating at a yajna or a homa in an elaborate manner. However, one who officiates at ordinary rituals such as *śrāddhā*, chathurthi *pūjā*, and *dhvādhaśi pūjā* etc is also called a vādhyār. When we study a very special discipline such as philosophy, music, or some other *śāsthrā* under one person for an extended period of time, this person is referred to as a guru. In school or college, when we have several teachers, we refer to them again as 'vādhyārs'. However, this is only used in colloquial contexts; in formal communications, written as well as spoken, we refer to them as 'āsiriyars' (Tamil). This 'āsiriyar' is also a corrupted form of '*Āchāryā*'.

Only in Tamil Nādu has it somehow become common to tag on 'āsiriyar' to writers and magazine editors. Perhaps this usage stems from the fact that those who teach writing in school are referred to as 'āsiriyar' and hence these writers and editors who belong to the 'writing' profession are called 'āsiriyar' as well. Or perhaps it follows a different logic. Whatever the reality may be, what is expected of the writers and editors is that they assume the role of an *Āchāryā* by cultivating a virtuous mind. This expectation might have taken expression in the form of referring to them as 'āsiriyar'.

In the colloquial usage, we simply refer to any teacher as 'vādhyār', regardless of whether it is a religious or some other secular subject that they teach; we don't say 'āsiriyar' or '*Āchāryā*'.

'Vādhyār ' is simply a corrupted form of the Sanskrit word 'upādhyāya'

What does 'upādhyāya' mean?

It is 'upa' and 'adhyāya' that combine to form the compound word 'upādhyāya'.

The term 'adhyāya' might remind you that the same word also denotes a chapter.

Connection to Vēdhās :

You might think of an adhyāya as one episode of a serial story appearing in one issue of a weekly magazine; this is its current usage. This particular meaning, which denotes a chapter in a book, is of a very recent origin. In ancient times, the words 'adhyayam', 'adhyayanam', 'adhyayam', etc. were used to refer to the recitation of *Vēdhās*, which were not to be written or learned from a written form; but hearing and recitation and memorization was allowed. Every aspect of our day-to-day life is solely guided by the *Vēdhās*. Therefore, later on, when disciplines such as novels, epics, secular science, and philosophical *Śāsthrās* were studied, the sections that they were organized into were also referred to as adhyāyas. Various such sections and subsections were given specific names; adhyāya was one such name. Kāndam, kandam, sargam, patalam, parvam, parichchedham, uchchavāsam, ullāsam, angam, *prakarañam*, and skandham are some of the other names given to such small and large sections of a book. Among them, adhyāya is the word that has *Vēdhic* connection.

Let me give another example to show how every aspect of our life is linked with the *Vēdhās*. We use the word 'pātam' to denote a lesson. The subject could be geography or even the history written by the very same researchers who dismiss *Vēdhās* as a bunch of lies. A lesson in even these subjects is referred to as pātam. Similarly, when we refer to a school as a *'Pātaśālā'*, usage of this same pātam comes in. Even if there is a school to teach atheism, that will be referred to as *Pātaśālā* as well. But what is the original meaning of pātam? - It simply means *Vēdhic* recitation. Specifically, one of the 'nithya karmās' (daily ritual) called *Brahma Yajnam* is called pātam. This *Brahma Yajnam* is the daily recitation of the *Vēdhās.* It is actually pronounced as pātam with the hard-stressed 'Ta' sound (the second in the 'ta', 'Ta', 'da', 'Da' series).

The one who memorizes and recites the *Vēdhās* is called 'pāti'. For instance, 'ghana pāti' is a scholar who has learned to recite the *Vēdhā* phrases in the form called 'ghanam', which involves weaving the phrases in a specific, complex manner. Students who study the *Vēdhās* together are called 'saha pātis'. However, in practice, any colleague, in any profession, not necessarily connected to *Vēdhās*, is also called a saha pāti these days.

Upādhyāya and Āchāryā

We were just discussing *vādhyār-upādhyāya-adhyāya.* Moving further, adhyāpaka denotes a person who teaches *Vēdha adhyāya.* The teaching of *Vēdhā* is called adhyāpanam and that of learning it is called adhyayanam. The one who does the teaching is adhyāpaka. So upādhyāya is the same as upa-adhyāpaka. Instead of becoming upādhyāpaka, it simply became upādhyāya.

The prefix 'upa' has many meanings. The one that is relevant to this discussion is its connotation of a subordinate entity performing the same function as the entity that follows the prefix 'upa', but on a smaller scale, assisting the higher level entity. Some examples are: angam-upāngam, *Purāṇam - upapurāṇam*, and *janādhipathi - upjanādhipathi* (president, vice-president). In general, the one without the 'upa' is superior and the one with the 'upa' is inferior.

Śāsthrās mention the status of *upādhyāyās* as a rung lower than adhyāpakās, serving as their helper or assistant; they do not grant them the full glory that is bestowed on adhyāpakās. To elaborate:

Smruthis mention two kinds of *adhyāpakās*, both teaching *Vēdhās*: one is *āchāryā*, and the other is upādhyāya. The exact difference between an *āchāryā* and an upādhyāya is detailed in Manusmruthi, exalted as the best of all Smruthis.

An *āchāryā* is one who doesn't take up teaching to earn a living. The sole reason for his establishing a gurukula and teaching is his duty, as a *brāhmin*, to see to it that all the knowledge that he had acquired would continue to shine forever and not end with himself. He doesn't talk about any fees with the students who join his gurukula. Only at the completion of all the lessons - it usually takes twelve years to accomplish this - at the request of the student himself, will he specify some *dakshiṇā* (respectful offering). Even a flower offered in the place of gold is enough to satisfy him. For the sole purpose of making sure that supreme knowledge reaches a worthy recipient, he expends all his energy in teaching. He doesn't consider teaching to be restricted to some preset school period alone and feel relieved from the bother of the student at other times; letting the student live with him for years on end at the gurukula, he also takes responsibility for the student's moral development. Such a teacher is called an *āchāryā*.

That this country was home for several such gurukulās all over is a matter for great pride. Those of us who bear the title of *āchāryā* keep reiterating these things only to make sure that they don't disappear as mere glories of the past.

Teaching As A Livelihood

Manusmruthi differentiates an *upādhyāya* from an *āchāryā* as someone who takes up teaching for his livelihood as opposed to the greater purpose of enabling knowledge to be propagated forever. Since he works for remuneration, it refers to him as '*Pruthaka adhyāpaka*' (one who works for a wage). He typically teaches just one part of the *Vēdhās* and gets paid for it.

Ekadēśam thu vēdhasya vēdhāngānyapivā puna: ।
yo (a)dhyāpayathi vrudhyartham upādhyāya:sa uchyathē ॥

In ancient times, people who taught only for their livelihood (*vrudhyārtham*) were very few. Gurukulās were conducted by great *āchāryās* without the blemish of bartering. However, work-for-wage teachers must have also been these even in those times since the *Dharma Śāsthrās* contain references to them.

Similarity and Dissimilarity Between Guru and Āchāryā

Dharma Śāsthrās define a guru, *āchāryā*, and upādhyāya.

According to one specification a guru is one who teaches someone right from the *Gāyathrī upadēśam* during the Brahmōpadēśam on his *upanayanā*m day and teaches him all the way up to the very end of *Vēdhānthā darśanam*. An āch*Āryā* is one who teaches only the *Śāsthrās*, either fully or partially, without being involved in the *Brahmōpadēśam*. For example, Lord *Krishņā' s* guru is *Gargāchāryā* (who performed his *upanayanā*m) and Sāndhīpani is the *āchāryā* who taught him all the *Śāsthrās*.

In common usage a guru has come to mean one who imparts something through his grace, without being bound to a formal tradition, and an *āchāryā* as one who provides a formal learning, bound by a rigorous, traditional syllabus. In accordance with this, I remember that one of the *Dharma Śāsthrās* defines a guru as someone who gives *upadēśam* in any language and *āchāryā* as one who does only *Vēdha adhyāpanam*.

A guru, like *Dhaththāthrēyā*, provides spiritual advancement simply through the power of his grace that doesn't conform to any tradition; an *āchāryā*, on the other hand, like our *Bhagavadhpādhā*, expounds in elaborate detail, on a *siddhanthā* that has been set forth conforming to a rigorous tradition. This is the common interpretation. That is why we say Dhaththaguru but not *Dhaththāchāryā*. However, people like our *Bhagavadhpādhā*, who preached in a rational, systematic manner and also possessed the power of grace were referred to as both *Śankarāchāryā* and *Śankaraguru*. But as mentioned above, the *Śāsthrā*' definitions are different. Manusmruthi, which is quoted as the authority on *Dharma Śāsthrās*, gives the same definition for *Āchāryā* as well as guru - that is, an *āchāryā* should also start with the *Gāyathrī upadēśa* at the *śishyā's upanayanā*m and teach all the *Śāsthrās* with no omissions.

> '*upanīya thu ya: śishyam Vēdham adhyāpayēth dhvija: |*
> *sakalpam sarahasyam cha tham āchārya praśakshathe ||*

There is yet another meaning of 'guru' that associates a lot of divinity to the term. *Parabrahmam* is an entity that has no form or attribute. How can we comprehend it with our mind which is capable of comprehending only form and attributes? It is precisely for this reason, the *Parabrahmam* gracefully dons a form (*rūpā*) and attributes (*guṅa*) and comes as a human. It is indeed this human form that we refer to as Gu-Ru, combining the 'Gu' to denote *Guṅa* and the 'Ru' to denote the *Rūpā*.

In the very olden times, sons received Brahmōpadēśam from their own fathers and then these fathers taught them all the disciplines that they knew themselves. The number of disciplines was fewer in those days. Each family treasured one discipline as their family possession and passed it on to generations. At that time, the father was the guru himself. In very ancient texts like *Rāmāyaṅa*, only the father is referred to as guru. Even in later times, we find the epics making similar references.

Subsequently, when the number of disciplines increased, people wondered, 'Why should each discipline be limited to just one family? Why don't we pool together and exchange these?' When such opinions developed, the practice of going to an elder other than the father for learning other disciplines came into place. Many of them attained mastery in several disciplines. Then it dawned on them that it was better to let their boys take instructions from masters of several disciplines right from the beginning, rather than studying with the father who might know only a few disciplines. This led to the practice of the boys receiving *Brahmōpadhēśam* from such masters and going to their āśrama and studying in the gurukula system.

Special Aspects of Gurukula Not Available at Home

In course of time, people started recognizing the merits of sending the boys away to study under the tutelage of a master other than one's own father, even when the father was highly learned. In this system, the boys were able to grow up with greater moral discipline as there was no room for any undue lenience resulting in conduct being affected as it might happen at home. Everyone realised that the gurukula system was better for learning and imbibing good conduct and seeking *bikshā* (alms) infused simplicity and humility. This eventually led to the practice of the same guru, who undertook the responsibility of teaching from start to end, performing the boy's Brahmōpadēśam as well.

In spite of this, we see a few examples here and there of boys studying in the gurukulams run by their own fathers when they were very highly accomplished masters. We also see instances in upanishads that cite cases where such fathers, after teaching their sons initially, sent them away to other gurus for further education. The amount of dedication and care that they showed for their offspring's growth of knowledge and purification of their soul is really amazing.

Currently, most fathers are not at all concerned about either of these. They think it is quite enough if their sons bring in bulging wallets by whatever path. It doesn't seem to matter where they migrate to or what level they reduce themselves to; they send them there regardless of the kind of education or occupation. Sometimes, even without waiting for the father to send him, the son cuts the ties himself and leaves; he also keeps the bulge accumulating in his wallet all for himself, sparing nothing for his father.

In ancient times, driven by the aspiration to see their sons lauded as a 'learned man', they entrusted their young child to a guru at a tender age, immediately after their Brahmōpadēs̄am, with a sense of sacrifice.

Now, for some reason, it has come full circle, and the father is again performing the Brahmōpadēs̄am himself. Currently, even though for all purposes the old type of education is all but extinct, a ritual called 'the thread ceremony' still continues for namesake, and the father is performing the Brahmōpadēs̄am.

In olden days, even fathers who were true masters sacrificed their parental rights and expertise, let their son be initiated by an exalted master, had him perform the Brahmōpadēs̄am instead and let him educate their child. This is why the ritual of *Brahmōpadēs̄am* itself is called *'upanayanām'*. *'upanayanām'* means 'to take one closer'. Since this ritual leads a boy close to an *āchāryā* who runs a gurukula, this is called *upanayanā*m. There is no need to 'lead to anywhere' when studying under his own father in his own home. First, the father leads his son to the *āchāryā*. Then the *āchāryā* leads him to *Īswarā*. We may call this the second *upanayanā*. It is this same guru who finally initiates one into the sanyāsa ās̄rama that leads him directly to the 'parathathvam' (Supreme Truth). During this last *upanayanām,* the sacred thread of the first *upanayanā*m is removed!

The Manusmruthi and the Yājnavalkyā Smruthi proclaim that the pithā (father) who creates a *jīvā* (life) through garbhādhānam, who then performs the saṁskārās such as *jāthakarmā*, *Nāmakarmā*, and *choulam*, is indeed the guru, and the one who performs the *upanayanām* followed by adhyāpanam is the *āchāryā*. The father who stops with just being a guru and not the *āchāryā* has no role in the teaching of knowledge. He actually appears similar to the current day's 'mere father'. Even this statement isn't quite correct - present day fathers don't seem to perform even the saṁskārās of garbhādhānam to choulam for their sons according to *śāsthrās.*

When a child is sent with the *āchāryā* after the thread ceremony, he might feel sad due to separation and the anxiety that he is going to a strange place and a strange house. Perhaps as a way to diffuse this anxiety, the *āchāryā* was given the same 'guru' title as the father and his *āśrama* was called 'guru' kula to encourage the child to think of him as another father.

The Greatness of Mother and Father

In spite of not being a direct provider of formal education, the father is placed even higher than the *āchāryā* in Manusmruthi. It proclaims that an *āchāryā* is higher than ten *upādhyāyās* and the father is higher than a hundred *āchāryās.* It then gives the highest honor to the mother and says that the mother is higher than a thousand fathers.

During Yājnavalkyā's time, it appears that either the father, or in his place, the elder brother customarily performed the *upanayanām*. Only if these two were not there, did an outsider perform this function - here, 'Not there' doesn't just mean only 'not alive' it means also 'if they are not qualified'. What is the qualification? It is that he should have attained mastery of his own designated *Vēdhā śāka* (branch of *Vēdhā*); in addition, he should be teaching it to others. He shouldn't be practicing any occupation that is not appropriate for a *brāhmin*. (According to this standard, it is highly doubtful whether any father is qualified these days to perform the *upanayanā*m for his son.)

In a few other Smruthis, 'guru' is the term that is used to refer to any 'elder' in general. In addition to the male elders such as father, elder brother, grandfathers, siblings of parents, father-in-law, the king, and the entire group of *Brāhmins*, they refer to the female elders such as mother, grandmothers, wife of *āchāryā*, aunts, mother-in-law, elder sister, and stepmother also as 'guru'.

Though several such gurus are mentioned like this, the Manu specifically associates the term 'guru' with the father, who brings the son into the world and brings him up. Manu also proclaims that the *āchāryā*, who provides the knowledge and thus acquires equal status with the father, deserves to be honored as 'guru' as well.

(The Sanskrit word 'gowravam', which means honor, literally means 'that which belongs to guru'.)

The Manu, while proclaiming that any one who imparts any kind of knowledge - not just limited to *Dharma Śāsthrās* and adhyāthma *Śāsthrās* - must be regarded as a guru, highly exalts the greatness of the *āchāryā*, who, among all these gurus, fully imparts the true knowledge.

Guru Younger Than Oneself

We find from the *Dharma Śāsthrās* that the practice of referring to a teacher as guru (which implies an elder) is based on the notion that anyone who teaches must be considered an elder, regardless of his age. From this, we infer that it is acceptable to receive instructions from people even younger than one self. It reveals the lofty principle that age hierarchy shouldn't come in the way of knowledge acquisition and spiritual development.

To impress upon this, Manu has narrated the following story.

Once, Angiras Maharishi's son taught a discipline to his own uncles (Angiras' brothers). At that time, he addressed them as 'Sons!' Angered by this, they approached the dēvās and lodged their complaint.

But the dēvās sent them off saying, 'Your complaint is not valid. If you lack the knowledge of a discipline and you happen to learn it from someone whose relationship is akin to your son, then it really makes you the youths and him the elder. Age and gray hair don't automatically elevate one to the status of an elder. One who has meticulously mastered the *Vēdhās* becomes an elder to us.'

The ripe old *Yōga śrēshtās*, so old that they have nothing but skin and bones, are listening to the silent lesson given by the ever young *ādhi Guru* (the first guru) *Dhakshināmūrthi*. There is even a *slōkā* that pictures this scene - 'Behold the wonder under the banyan tree! The *śishyās* are old men, but the guru is a youth. And how is this young professor giving his lecture? In the language of silence! Even so, all the doubts of those *śishyās* crumble and dissipate'

chithram vatatharōr mūlē vrudhdhā: śishyā: gururyuvā
gurōsthu mounam vyākhyānam śishyāsthu chhinna samśayā: ||

There are five ways in which someone is considered an elder: First is based on wealth. We immediately seem to respect someone who is a wealthy lord. Second is based on the hierarchy of relationship. The wife of an elder brother or an uncle, even if younger in age, is considered an elder because of her position in the relationship hierarchy. The third is based on age. Any ripe old person is respected as an elder. The fourth is based on accomplishment of *Vēdhic karmās*. Someone who has performed great yajnas or one who is a strict observer of great injunctions, is revered regardless of age. The fifth is based on erudition. A great scholar of any discipline is highly respected. When *Dharma Śāsthrās* enumerate these categories, they specify that the order is in ascending significance - making the fifth one, honoring someone based on erudition, the highest of all.

Mother - Father - Āchāryā

Several sources mention *āchāryā*, father, and mother, in ascending order of significance. Nevertheless, the general consensus is that all three of them must be regarded as an *amśa* (part) of *Īśwarā* and respected as such. We even come across some *Dharma Śāsthrās* that elevate the *āchāryā* higher than the parents. Manu proclaims that one attains this world through devotion to the mother, anthariksha world through devotion to the father, and the world of *Brahmā* through devotion to the *āchāryā*, thus exalting the *āchāryā' s* glory a great deal.

Just as the positive results of service to these people are mentioned, the adverse results of even a small betrayal done to these people are mentioned as well.

Adhyāpaka

There are three ways to refine a *śishya*: The first is by teaching him, the second is through the power of grace, and the third is by purifying him through some *Vēdhic* ritual (samskāra). Since the power of grace cannot be brought under the realm of the *Śāsthrās* , Smruthis do not discuss that at all. Of the other two, there are two schools of thought: According to the first, the one who purifies the *śishya* through *Vēdhic* ritual and then instructs him is the guru and the one who simply instructs him is the *āchāryā*. According to the second, no such distinction is made; it considers the one who performs all these functions as the *Āchāryā*. Both of these kinds of *āchāryās* are also called adhyāpaka. Upādhyāya is on a lower rung in this order, teaching for remuneration.

Elevated Status of 'Upādhyāya'

When the number of true *āchāryās* who took to teaching because it was their dharma and not for livelihood started dwindling and the number of *upādhyāyās* started increasing, the term '*upādhyāya*' actually gained respect rather than being considered inferior. Losing the original meaning, *upādhyāya* came to denote anyone whose occupation was teaching. Even the true *āchāryās* came to be called *upādhyāyās*. This is why several people in the north who traditionally provided *Vēdhic* instructions, appended the title of '*upādhyāya*'to their names without any inferiority complex.

In Bengal, there are several Mukherjis, Chatterjis, and Banerjis. Several people also keep the expanded pure forms of these names, namely, Mukhōpādhyāya, Chathurōpādhyāya, and *Vandhyōpādhyāya*. In 'Mukha upādhyāya', 'mukham'means *Vēdhā*. *'Mukham'* denotes mouth in Sanskrit. Mouth stands for 'word'. Considering that the 'word' itself means *Vēdhās*, *Vēdhās* are named 'mukha'. The *upādhyāya* who teaches this *Vēdhā* is 'mukha upādhyāya'or 'Mukherji'. The 'chathur'part of 'chathurōpādhyāya' denotes *Vēdhās* as well - the *chathur* (four) *Vēdhās*. ('Chathur' became 'chattar'and then 'chatterji'). Ramakrishṅa Paramahamsa was born in a 'chattōpādhyāya' family. His wife, who is revered as 'holy mother', hails from a 'mukhōpādhyāya' family. 'Vandhya upādhyāya'means an *upādhyāya* who deserves salutation. According to the Bengali tradition, 'vandhya' became 'bandhya', which went through further transformations, and became 'Banerji'.

Thus, *upādhyāya* became a very respectable term. Later, even in British administration, distinguished scholars were conferred the title of *'Mahā Mahōpādhyāya'* as a great recognition. Many of these honorees possessed all the lofty characteristics of an *āchāryā* and conducted gurukulās with no concern about income, sometimes even spending their own wealth and possessions for running them.

As Worship of Īśwarā

There are many occupations. People practice one of these occupations for making a living. No one thinks there is anything wrong or dishonorable in this. However, doing *Īśwara pūjā* and imparting knowledge were treated as exceptions and accepting remuneration for these was considered inferior. The reason for this is the feeling that it is inappropriate to equate an act that is capable of providing spiritual satisfaction to one that simply serves to fill up the stomach. From this, we infer that they must have considered knowledge acquisition on par with worship of *Īśwarā.*

Śāsthrās do dictate that each one should practice the occupation designated for his caste and earn his living. A perusal of the ancient Tamil literature clearly reveals what the occupation of a *brāhmin* is - they are referred to as 'Ārū thozhilōr', meaning 'those who do six things'. *Brāhmins* must undertake six occupations; they are called *'shadkarmā niratha'*. What are these six occupations? First is adhyayana - he should learn the *Vēdhās*; there is no room for any earning in this activity. Second is adhyāpana - he must teach others; not just *Vēdhās* - he must learn all the occupations and teach them to the people of the respective castes.

This doesn't mean that each *brāhmin* is required to acquire expertise in all the occupations, nor is it feasible. It simply means that he should also gain mastery in one or two other occupations and teach it to those who belong to these occupations. This is only if he can do it in his spare time, without jeopardizing his primary responsibilities of teaching *Vēdhās* and performing his required karmās, all of which are intended for the general welfare of the world. *Purāṅās* and *īthihāsās* cite several cases of such *Brāhmins* who specialized in each of the disciplines of *Āyur Vēdhā* (medical), Artha *Śāsthrā* (politics/economics), *Nātya Śāsthrā* (dance), *Dhanur Vēdhā* (military science), and the likes, and taught them to appropriate people.

A *brāhmin* may only teach the occupations belonging to the other castes; however lucrative these occupations may be, in terms of their earning potential, he must never practice them for a living. He must be content with whatever *dakshiṅā* that these students voluntarily offer. In other words, he must only play a part in aiding others to conduct their occupation and make a good living and not utilize it to amass wealth for himself. Not only that - he must practice even this teaching, which is his own designated occupation, with no motive to earn a living. Instead, in a manner that gratifies *Īśwarā*, he should teach with the sole purpose of propagating knowledge. This is the dictum of the *Śāsthrās*.

The lack of proper attention to these facts is the cause of the misconstrued complaint that the *brāhmin* wrote all these *Śāsthrās* with selfish motive. An open-minded review of this will reveal that the *brāhmin* did not set aside any privilege for his own welfare. On the other hand, he reserved several disadvantages for himself; for the sake of spiritual development and the welfare of the world, he subjected himself to a lot of hardship.

Receiving is Lowly

Of the six occupations, the remaining four are: *yajanam* - performing yāga on his own, *yājanam* - conducting yāga on behalf of someone else, dhānam - charity, prathigraham - to receive dhānam. *Yājanam* and dhānam involve only expenses, no income. *Yājanam* will bring in some *dakshiṅā*. Prathigraham will also enable him to receive some mānyam (gift given as support). An important fact is that in addition to the general notion that receiving is lowly, it is said that when receiving dhānam, the pāpas (sins) of the giver also get transmitted to the receiver. In fact, there is a long, frightening list of prāyaschiththas (corrective atonements) specified for each kind of dhāna received from each kind of person. These warnings don't come from anyone else but the *brāhmin* has written these warnings in the *Sāsthrās* to frighten himself. Accomplished śrouthis (those well versed in *Sāsthrās*) wold prefer to be the yajamāna of the yāga that they conduct and thus reap its fruits rather than conduct it for some other yajamāna and receive small *dakshiṅā*. They usually perform such *yājanam* only because it is one of the duties of a *brāhmin*; even then, they world pass on the *dakshiṅā* that they receive to some other worthy cause.

Therefore, though there are six occupations, as far as earning is concerned, three of these, namely adhyayanam, *yājanam*, and dhānam, cannot give for any income. *Yājanam* and prathigraham also come with so many restrictions. Teaching, the only remaining occupation, should normally allow for a comfortable income. Yet, it has been designated as something that must be disseminated as a special kind of dhāna called *vidhyā* dhāna (knowledge as charity) and its divine aspect preserved instead of viewing it as a means of income.

When a *śishya* offers voluntarily, *āchāryās* usually accept it. Even then, the truly great *āchāryā*s accept this *dakshiṅā* only when they are thoroughly satisfied with their own performance instead of relying on the student's satisfaction. The following occurs in the first *Brāhmaṅā* of the fourth adhyāya of the *Brihadhāraṅyaka* upanishadh: As Yājnavalkyā finishes each instruction, Janaka follows it up with a sambāvanā (offering). However, Yājnavalkyā keeps refusing the *dakshiṅā* each time, quoting his father's opinion that one shouldn't accept *dakshiṅā* until all the instructions are completed in full!

Specialty Not Found in Other Countries

This is the reason why there is a vast difference in the degree of respect that goes with the position of guru and *āchāryā* in our country and the respect commanded by a teacher in other countries. In others countries, people are not aware of the concept that a teacher is *Īswarā* or His representative to whom student makes total surrender. They are simply regarded as some one who has gained expertise and knowledge in various fields and are capable of teaching them to others in a nice manner. This is the perception of the teacher also.

In our country the qualification of an *āchāryā* has been raised to a level that demands the leading of a pure life and having spiritual experience and there is no material compensation for his service. The intelligence, the vast store of knowledge, and the ability to expound these in an understandable manner are all the functions of the brain. The key difference in the *āchāryā* of our country is that he doesn't stop with this excellence of brain-power alone like in other countries. He is expected to be pristine in life, and to observe all the prescribed karmās with no deviation from the *Vēdhās* that he teaches.

An *āchāryā* has been defined to be someone possessing the following three characteristics: the acquisition of thorough knowledge of the principles of *Śāsthrās* *('āśinōthih: śāsthrārtham')*, practically applying this knowledge in life and being a stickler for those *śāsthric* injunctions *('swayam ācharathē')* and teaching these *Śāsthrās* to others and establishing them firmly in this orthodox life *('āchārē sthāpayathyapi')*. One who satisfies only the first condition is called a 'vidhvān' - not an '*āchāryā*'. One who satisfies the first two but not the third, is called an 'anushtāthā', or 'anubhavi' if he is further refined, but never '*āchāryā*'. One who satisfies the first and the third conditions, is called 'prachārakā', but not above it. Only when one has all three qualifications does he receive the *'āchāryā'* title.

After learning well, one must live by its principles - says Thiruvalluvar. This, learning living by it, teaching it to others and training them to live by what they are learnt are the defining characteristics of an *āchāryā*. The greatest of the glories of our nation is that many such *āchāryās* have been here.

The great Valluvar himself has declared that this world is not viable for people without means. Such means or wealth was not sanctioned for brāmin but he was trained in the spirit of sacrifice 'teaching for the sole purpose of knowledge propagation'. Induced by this mindset of sacrifice once a person starts performing nishkāmya karmā (action without desire for results) but as a service to the world, all other spiritual wealth will be drawn to him with no exception. Even the *śruthi* (*Vēdhās*) mentions, 'just through sacrifice, several people have attained immortality.'

With purity of mind acquired as a result of performing numerous karmānushtānas (observance of prescribed injunctions) and detachment from wealth, he housed the children of other families in his own *parṇaśālā* (hermitage) and carried out the *vidhyā* dhānam day in and day out. This led to his acquisition of great spiritual wealth and his ability to command immense respect automatically. If someone is asked to regard someone else as God and told to surrender everything to him just for the sake of his intellectual accomplishments, would he follow that? It was because of his pure conduct, mindset of sacrifice and the graceful nature of regarding other children left in his care as his own and raising them as such that the *śishyās* were able to dedicate themselves to him, considering him as *Īśwarā*. This kind of student-teacher model is not seen in any other country.

Distinguished Āchāryās in Secular Education Too

Not just teachers of *Vēdhās*, but even those of secular subjects have possessed such exalted qualities. They might not have had spiritual realization and divine experiences, but they had great human characteristics. Since this was the general norm, *śishyās* surrendered even to those few *āchāryās* who were partial or bad-tempered and served them with loyal devotion. Otherwise, why would Ēkalavyā have dedicated himself to Dhrona, who taught only *Dhanur Vēdhā*, which is the science of warfare? Similarly, why would Karñā have served *Paraśurāmā* almost like a slave?

The teachers of our nation had lived such virtuous lives in addition to gaining mastery in their disciplines that even a dance teacher was honored with the title of '*āchāryā*' and was called '*nrithyāchāryā*'. Take Haridhās for example, the music teacher of the famous 'lion of music' Tānsen, who was Akbar's court musician. It is seen that he was a great *Mahān*, almost a rishi. He is referred to as Haridhās *Swāmi*, with respect.

Very close to our time, within the past hundred years, a music vidhvān named *Mahā* Vaidhyanātha *Śivam* lived right here in *Thiruvaiyāru*. He led such an exemplary life that people didn't even mention him by name out of respect and referred to him only as *'Śivan Vāḻ'*. He never skipped a single day of *Śiva pūjā*; not a single sandhyā vandhanam went unobserved; even when travelling for concerts out of town, if the special *pūjā* box didn't arrive, he would forego his meals and simply fast. To avoid any encumbrance to the observance of the evening ritual, he would start the concert in the afternoon, as early as 3 o'clock and finish it well before 6 o'clock. If that were not possible, he would rather start the concert after 6:30 to leave enough time to finish his sandhyā vandhanam. If other constraints left him no option but to start the concert at four or five, he resorted to the practice of stopping precisely at the proper time for sandhyā vandhanam. Leaving the concert, he would finish the ritual and then resume it.

His elder brother *Rāmaswāmi* S̄ivam was the one who actually took care of all his finances and other administrative matters. This brother was also full of bhakthi and was proficient in composing devotional lyrics. He has composed ‘Peria *Purāña*‘ *kīrthanās* on the sixty-three Nāyanmārs (the exalted s̄aivite saints). Leaving everything under the elder’s responsibility, the younger brother dedicated his entire life to music, S̄iva *pūjā*, and the chanting of the *Gāyathrī* manthra. He didn’t even give any thought to establishing a *s̄ishya* parampara (line of disciples) of his own. Nevertheless, drawn by his virtues and regarding him as divine, about twenty to thirty *s̄ishyās* always gathered around him, voluntarily taking residence in his house. Although he didn’t sit down and teach them formally, they learned on their own simply by listening to his musical outpourings meant for his own soul satisfaction. He even fed these *s̄ishyās* without accepting any guru *dakshiñā*!

Such was the conduct of even those who taught dance, music, or military art, that they were honored as ‘*āchāryā*‘. How much more respect would the teachers of *Vēdha S̄āsthrās* command! Without a doubt, they must have been worthy of their *s̄ishyās*’ total dedication, infused by their view of these teachers as none other than *Īs̄warā*.

Not Institutionally But Through Individuals Only

The important reason for this greatness was that teaching was not run as a business. The reason why it got elevated as sacrifice, was because education in our country was never institutionalized, but spread only through individuals.

Even those institutions of *Nālandā* and Taxila, which resembled present-day universities, arose only during the era of the Buddhists. Before that, the practice of several teachers teaching several subjects to students of various levels in one place was not prevalent in our ancient *Vēdhic* society. Individual *āchāryās* simply used their own āśrama to conduct *gurukula*. They were probably assisted by one or two *upā adhyāpakās*.

Kulapathī

There was the rare phenomenon of the gurus teaching all the 14 traditional *Vidhyās* with the help of a number of assistants and senior students. The guru (in charge) was called a 'kulapathi.'

We speak of Kulapathi Munshi. There is Kulapathi *Balakrishṇa* Joshi in Madras. But the two are nor Kulapathis in the original sense of the word. With the passage of time it came about that some individuals who served the cause of education with distinction came to be called Kulapathis. Munshi established a number of educational institutions, among them the Bharatiya *Vidhyā* Bhavan, intended to propagate our cultural traditions. As for Joshi he earned a name as a distinguished teacher - he was for many years associated with the Theosophical School. We call Munshi and Joshi Kulapathis out of respect.

The Rise of the Ancient Teaching System

How did teaching originate in the earliest of times, during what is called *Vēdhic* period in our country and to the world.

The first schools originated as the rshis imparted to their children and the children of their close friends and relatives the *manthrās* and *Vidhyā* (learning) revealed to them by the grace of *Īśwarā*. The word '*vidhyā*' here does not mean the arts and sciences of later times. In those days only every path of 'upasanā' was called a *vidhyā*.

During deep meditation, when the faculties of a rishi are in union with the *Paramāthman*, *manthrās* are revealed to him from the ether which is a form of the very *Paramāthmā*. By the grace of the *Paramāthmā* a path of *upāsanā* is also revealed for the *manthrās* to be attained. Just as *Yamadharmarāja* gave *upadēsa* to *Nachikētas*, or the *Sanatkumārās* gave *upadēsa* to *Nāradā*, a great man of divine character would impart a *vidhyā* to a rshi or a deserving student. Nachikētas received from Yama the *upadēsa* of 'Agni-*vidhyā*' that has connection with the Svarga-*lōka*. Yama also gave the boon that the *vidhyā* would be named after *Nachikētas*, his student.

In the same way there are some *vidhyās* named after the students who received instruction in them. Thus we have '*Upakōsala-vidhyā*', '*Sathyakāma-vidhyā*', '*Maitrēyi-vidhyā*' - these are mentioned in the Upanishads.Each one of them is named after the disciple who received the *upadēsa* concerned, not after the guru who gave it, or of the deity invoked (*upāsanā*-murti) or the *taththva* pertaining to the *vidhyā*. From this we may realize the high place accorded to the student who was eager to learn a *vidhyā* with devotion and diligence.

Brahma-vidhyā is the end or goal of all *vidhyās*. It means the Upanishads which constitute the *Vēdhāntā* and speak of the Truth or the One Reality. There is the practice of asking 'What, is it such a big *Brahma-vidhyā*?' In the Upanishads (meaning the *Brahma-vidhyā*) are mentioned many *vidhyās* - '*Panchāgni-vidhyā*', 'Madhu-*vidhyā*', '*Vaisvānara-vidhyā*', 'Samvarga-*vidhyā*', 'Dahara-*vidhyā*', 'Ant*Āryāmi*-*vidhyā*', etc. There are some *vidhyās* involving a great deal of ritual and some others involving meditation and other *abhyāsās* (practices).

In the earliest times, *vidhyā* and *vidhyāsālā* were part of the family tradition (handed down from one generation to the next). Later, contacts developed between the various rishi kulas (clans) and education expanded. The inmates of a rishi kula learned not only the *vidhyā* and *manthrās* taught in it but also the *vidhyās* and *manthrās* and *sūkthās* associated with other rishi kulas.

Language, A Discipline of Sound

The most important tool in teaching is language. The world's first literary work, the Rig Vēdhā, contains the grammar that determines the form of the language. Westerners are full of admiration for this grammar. Apart from the rules of grammar as in other languages, students were also taught how to enunciate the svaras of each alphabet of the manthra. Each alphabet is to be pronounced by raising or lowering it or by uttering it in the even mode. The manthra is to be taught in the same form in which the rshis received them. Ages have passed since the time of those first schools which taught the *Vēdhās*. But even today all over the country a 'ghañapātin' teaches them in the same manner as in the first schools without the slightest change in the svaras or intonation!

Teaching Without Writing

This teaching was not through writing. The art of writing came much later. The early school had none of the appurtenances of the present-day school. We speak of '*aksharābhyāsā*' When a child is introduced to learning. Aksharam in this is the writing of alogavet. We learn from Valluvar and *Avvai* that writing was an important part of education even before two thousand years. They speak of the numerals and writing as the two eyes of *vidhyā*.

But in the ancient age, that is from the time of the *Vēdhās* for a long time, the entire system of learning in all its aspects was conducted without reading and writing. The student received his instruction orally and reproduced what he learned orally. It was ordained that the *Vēdhic manthrās* should not be written down for the reason that the divine sounds of the *Vēdhās* should ever prevail in the world for the well-being of mankind. But what has this to do with the rule that the *Vēdhās* should not written down.

How was a section of people to be created who would be dedicated to the task of propagating the sound of *manthrās*? It was laid down that this section should not pursue any occupation other than chanting the *manthrās* and that that was the only way by which they could earn their livelihood by was of grants or dakshina. It would not have been enough if such a section of people learnd the *Vēdhās* from books, reading them now and then. In writing it was not possible to make clear the 'ascent' and 'descent' of the svaras of the *manthrās*. If a mark is put here or there, it may lead to mistakes in printing or writing and the manthra itself will change and the result would be unfortunate.

There is a more important reason for this. If the *manthrās* were to be read only now and then they would make but a superficial impression on the mind and they would not be fully fruitful or rewarding. One's mind must be imbued with the *manthrās* and they must become integrated with one's life-breath. Only then would their chanting be fully potent. If we decide to learn the *Vēdhās* in the written form, we may tend to think. 'After all they are in the book. We are free to read them whenever we like.' This will lead to indifference and we may not take the trouble of memorizing the *manthrās*. Instead of the *manthrās* becoming an inward reality or our being steeped in them they will remain a mere outward factor. It is to avoid such a possibility that our ancient schools conducted their teaching without any written texts and solely depended on memorising.

The student was so moulded as to make him not only intelligent but virtuous. This enabled him the better to absorb the manthra. The manthra will become a shining inner reality only in that individual who leads a pure and chaste life; it is a process in which he becomes illumined. That is the reason why the student was made to observe the vow of *brahmacharyā* (celibacy). *Vidhyābhayāsā* or education was a vrata (vow) from the very beginning with *dīkshā* (initiation).

At birth a Brahmin too belongs to the fourth caste. At the time of his *upanayanā samskāra* he becomes a 'dvija' or twice-born. After his education he becomes a 'vipra'. With all the three he becomes a '*srōthriya*'. Such is the *sāsthrā* :

Janmanā jāyatē sūdrah Samskārāir dvija uchyathē
Vidhyayā yāti viprathvam Tribhih srōthriya uchyathē

The student becomes a 'Brahmin' when he is steeped in the *Vēdhās* - which are called the *'Brahman'* - and when he realizes the knowledge of the *Paramāthman* proclaimed in the same '*Brahman*'. This means education in our land was different from being a mere means of livelihood like today. Our forefathers, from the very beginning, took a lofty view of education and placed before themselves a very high ideal. This view meant imparting a student knowledge of the Self and helping him to triumph over the cycle of births.

The teacher recited each manthra five times and asked the student to repeat the same five times. The disciple was called an *'ēkasanta-grāhin'* if he could grasp a manthra and repeat it after hearing it only once.

Kula, Sākhā, Chāthrā, Charaña

We often hear people remark : 'We must know (so-and so's) kula (clan) and *gōthra*.' The descendants of the same rishi form a group belonging to a '*gōthra*'. 'Kula' means the group including descendants and their kin. It was in such a kula, it seems, that the ancient school originated. In those times it was known as 'rishikula' rather than as 'gurukula'. The term 'gurukula' suggests that there was no blood relationship between the guru and his pupils. However, the early schools consisted of gurus and students who formed a kinship. In the beginning, the father was the guru. This type of early school propagated a *vidhyā* that had been discovered by an ancestor rishi or a *vidhyā* that had been revealed to him - so it was called a rishikula.

Later the *rishikulas* exchanged the *vidhyās* and *manthrās* discovered by the various rishis. The kulas and *gōthras* that came together thus followed the same practices. Here and there appeared groups that brought together the *manthrās* taught by various rishis and each group studied the *manthrās* thus brought together. Thus arose *śakhās*, divisions of the same *Vēdhā* that slightly differ from one another. Historically speaking, the *vidhyāśālās* or schools came after the rishikulas and were connected with the gurukulās, each of them concerned with the study of a particular *śākhā*. By now education had expanded beyond the original schools of blood relatives. It began to embrace all people belonging to one section of the *Vēdhās* and following the same practices. Later the gurukula further broadened its scope to include not only different *śakhās* of the same *Vēdhā* and but all *Vēdhās* and also other branches of learning.

From *Pāñini's* grammar we find that the student (what we today call '*māñavan*' in Tamil or '*vidhyārthin*' or 'śishyā' in Sanskrit, is refered to as a 'chāthra'. 'Chathram' means an umbrella. The student came to be called a *chāthrā* because, like one protected by the umbrella from rain and sun, he came under the protection of the guru and was guarded against all bad or unhealthy influences. From this we gain an idea of the noble character of the guru and of how he was imbued with love for his disciple. I say this because, unlike today, when education is confined to imparting knowledge, education then meant, in addition, moulding the student's character.

We also learn from *Pāñini* that the school was called a '*charañam*'. '*Charañam*' literally means a foot. We call our foot also 'pādam' or 'padam'. We use the word in the term denoting the most elevated of positions, Paramapada. The feet support our body, so too does it (pada) support our life. It is in the same sense that the gurukula is called a '*charaňa*'.

The adhyāpaka or *Vēdhic* teacher is called a 'ṡrōthriya' if he chants and teaches the *Vēdhic* texts up to the final standard called 'ghanam'. The teacher who is not only well versed in the *Vēdhic manthrās* but is also proficient in explaining their meanings, their significance, is called a 'pravakta'. One who does 'pravachana' is a 'pravakta' (one who expounds).

Subsequently, as stated earlier, two types of teachers came into being, the '*āchāryā*' and the 'up*adhyāyā*'.

Pāňini refers to students taught in the same gurukula as 'sa*brahmachārins*' and '*sathīrthyas*'. These names were used in later times too. In English we say 'class-mates'. 'Gurubhais' is the term used in the North.

Guru-dakshiňa

Manu speaks about the dakshiňa to be given to the guru after a student completes his studies in the gurukula: it may be according to the disciple's capacity-cows, land, gold, clothes, grain, vegetables, umbrellas, sandals, whatever. Manu also says that a teacher who teaches for his livelihood (fixing his fees beforehand) is not eligible to take part in a *ṡrāddhā* ceremony. So also his student.

As education grew and expanded, instead of the earlier Kulas which taught only blood relatives, there developed big gurukulas that were common to all those entitled to study the *Vēdhās*. *Kshathriyās* and *Vaiṡyās* also joined them.

The arts and sciences of old

In course of time, *vidhyā*, which had been understood wholly as a path of devotion, so developed as to include the atrs and sciences as we understand them today. These were also taught in the gurukulas. The *Chāndōgya* Upanishad contains a long list of such arts and sciences. When we read it we are filled with amazement that centuries ago our forefathers had taken great strides in such a variety of subjects and had given instruction in them systematically.

(A 'Samhitā' is a collection, of *Vēdhic manthrās*. A '*Brāhmānā*' contains an explanation of how *Vēdha karmā* is to be conducted to the accompaniment of the *manthrās*. According to some, a division of a Samhitā as well as the school that teaches it is a '*sākhā*'. Similarly, a division of a *Brāhmanā* is a '*charanā*'.)

Even after becoming proficient in many vidva-s, *Nārada* is unhappy that he has not received the knowledge of Atman. In the *Chāndōgya* Upanishad *Nārada* mentions to Santakumaras the *vidhyā*-s he has learned. These include the four *Vēdhās*; the Epics and the *Purānās* (which *Nārada* calls the fifth Veda); grammar (which he describes as the *Vēdhā* of *Vēdhās*); pithryam, the kalpa relating to ceremonies in honour of departed ancestors; rāsi or mathematics also; Daivam or the science of signs forecasting ; ekayanam or statecraft; nidhi, that is finance or economics; vakovakyam or logic; *Dēva-vidhyā* or Niruktham (the etymology concerned with the meanings of the syllables of *Vēdhā-manthrās*); Brahma-*vidhyā* (this term usually means *Vēdhānthā* but here it means phonetics concerned with the sounds of *manthrās* - it is *Šikshā sāsthrā*); bhuta-*vidhyā* or the science pertaining to all creatures (biology); *kshēthra-vidhyā* or the art of warfare practiced by *Kshathriyās*; *nakshathra-vidhyā* meaning both astronomy and astrology; sarpa-*vidhyā*, the science of curing poisons; *Dēvajana-vidhyā* or the art of dance, drama, architecture, painting - the *vidhyā*-s belonging to the Gandharvas. (*Dēvajana* are those who are between the *Dēvās* of the summit and humans). *Nārada* thus mentions many disciplines.

Nārada was a great genius. So he was able to learn so many subjects. Along with that, even though he was so vastly learned he had the discrimination and humility to recognize that he had not experienced the bliss of the Āthman. That is why he approached the Sanatkumaras and received the *upadēsa* of *Āthma-vidhyā* from them. It is thus clear that the aim of educator, in our land is to obtain knowledge of the Godhead.

Coming to the subject of gurukulās, as a result of the increase in the number of disciplines, the gurukula must have expanded with an addition to the strength of the teachers also. Big schools must have arisen with separate classes for students who, unlike *Nārada* who learned a number of subjects, studied only a few disciplines.

Tagore started his *Sānthinikēthan* with the forest universities of our rishis as his model.

The difficulty *Nārada* felt (the desire to know *Āthmānandā*) was not common to all students of those times. Although education then had to do with the Āthman, an ordinary student was not all at once pushed on to the path of *jnānā*. Though a student was made aware of the Brahma-*vidhyā* on the intellectual plane there was no compulsion that he must have inner experience of it. After his education he got married, became involved in his household work, celebration of various festivals. He begot children and attained maturity of his mind (*chiththa*) by living out his past *karmā* and performing his religious duties. The *Vēdhās* and *sāsthrās* have it that it is only after living through these stages that a man can become a sanyāsin and be engaged in the quest of the Āthman. The education system was such as to help him in the gradual development towards this ultimate goal.

(According to one opinion '*Dēvajana-vidhyā*' comprises '*Dēva-vidhyā* and '*Jnāna-vidhyā*' '*Dēva-vidhyā*' means the arts of the Gandharvas while '*jāna-vidhyā*' means medical science).

Dharma and the Brahmam

Dharma is that which makes us lead a disciplined life so far as this world is concerned. The Brahmam concerns the other world (paralōka). The ordinary man (jīvā) arrives at the stage in which he is capable of inquiring into the Brahmam only through the pathway of dharma which is constituted by the pathway of *karmā* or action. The *Pūrvamīmāmsā* which constitutes the *karmā*-mārgā (path of *karmā*), is inquiry into dharma and leading a life according to the *Dharma Sāsthrā*. And the purpose of the *Uththaramīmāmsā* or *Vēdhānthā* is inquiry into the Brahmam and realizing it. Although *Vēdhānthā* was taught extensively in the schools of old, it did not mean, in the case of the majority of the students, anyting more than taking an interest in the subject. The students were not to be immediately involved in the pursuit of the goal of *Vēdhānthā*. When a student became a gruhastha or householder he lived a worldly life, in accordance with the tenets of dharma. It was only after he became mature within that he was qualified for full involvement in *Āthma-sāsthrā* (the *Āthma-sāsthrā* that he had learned earlier merely for outward knowledge and not for actual realization). *Nārada* was not an ordinary being. Because of his extraordinary nature he was inspired to know and realize the Brahmam soon after completing his education. He passed from the *brahmacharyāsrama* itself (without becoming a householder) to the state where he was qualified for Brahma-*jnānā*.

Nārada apart, the old type of education was such that an ordinary man did not stray into adharma (unrighteousness). By adhering to dharma - and with devotion - he became interested in *Āthma-vidhyā*.

All Subjects Are Vēdhic

An extremely important point must be made here. *Vidhyā* (learning) in ancient times was rooted in the *Vēdhās*. Whatever the art in question, or the science, it was connected with the study of the *Vēdhās*, with one or another of the fourteen *Vēdhic Vidhyā*-s. And the purpose of all this was to lead a life in conformity with the *Vēdhās*. Another interesting point is that some sections did not accept all parts of the *Vēdhās* and accepted only the *Pūrvamīmāmsā*. Like the *Chārvākās* there was another section that did not accept the *Vēdhās* at all. Then there were groups that neither accepted the *Vēdhās* nor opposed them. *Sānkhya* and *Yōgā* had their origin independently but even these subjects were taught along with the *Vēdhās*. Later emerged Buddhism which was non-*Vēdhic* and was opposed to the authority of the *Vēdhās*. The Buddhists established universities of their own. But in these universities too the fourteen branches of *Vēdhic* learning were taught.

Education For All Castes

When many *vidhyā*-s developed for different occupations, the three castes eligible to study the *Vēdhā* (Brahmins, *Kshathriyās* and *Vaiśyās*) joined the gurukulās. Even members of the fourth varña or caste came to the *āchāryā*s in the afternoon to learn the *śāsthrās* pertaining to their trades or occụpations. I will tell you later about the extent to which it was necessary for members of each caste to receive education from the gurukula. You will then realize that there was no partiality or discrimination in this field.

Usually, students belonging to all the three varñas residing in a gurukula did not study the same course. Their periods of education also varied. The *upanayanā* of children belonging to the three castes was also performed at different ages and they were, therefore, sent to the gurukula not at the same age.

Compulsory Education

It was obligatory, according to the *śāsthrās*, for the members of all three castes mentioned above to receive Brahmōpadēśa and education from a guru. It means that education was compulsory, not left to the sweet will of the parents. If the children were not sent to a guru their parents were severely punished. In those days the harshest and most humiliating punishment was to make one lose his caste. According to the *s̄āsthrās* Brahmins, *Kshathriyās* and *Vais̄yās* who did not go to learn from a guru were expelled from their castes. Their children were excommunicated as *vrāthyās*. Our forefathers gave great importance to the acquiring of *Vēdhic* knowledge by those qualified to study the *Vēdhās* as well as other branches of learning.

The Deserving Alone....

Because education was compulsory, the students could not be half-hearted in their studies. The *Dharma S̄āsthrās* declare that education must be imparted to the deserving alone (satpatra), that is those who are prepared to learn whole-heartedly the entire course with the observance of the rules of *brahmacharyā*. The student should be chaste in conduct and must have a good grasp. He must have a fine retentive memory. '*Grahan̄a*-s̄akthi' is ability to grasp what is taught. Retaining it in the mind without being forgetful is dhāran̄a-s̄akthi.

You may ask how education could be compulsory and at the same time restricted to the deserving. What would a student have done if he was naturally poor in *Grahan̄a* and dhāran̄a? The answer is the child was sent to the guru after the Brahmōpadēs̄a, that is after imparting the Gāyathrī manthra. If a student chanted the Gāyathrī with earnestness and devotion he would be good at *Grahan̄a* and dhāran̄a.

When a student did not meditate on the Gāyathrī in the proper manner and did not therefore acquire the ability to grasp things he became an asath (not good, or false). No *vidhyā* was imparted to such students and they were not accepted in the community. Just as even a good seed goes futile if sown in a barren land so too a good *vidhyā* imparted to an asath will be rendered useless.

It is said that it would be better for a learned man to die with his *vidhyā* than teach an undeserving student. The idea that only the deserving should be taught is expressed in the form of a story in the *Dharma Śāsthrās* . The goddess of *vidhyā* tells a Brahmin: 'I am a great treasure you have received. You must safeguard me in the same way as you safeguard a treasure. Spend it with care and distribute it among the deserving. You must impart me (*vidhyā*) to a student who is chaste in body and mind, has subdued his senses and studies with diligence. And you must make sure that he too will preserve and safeguard me (*vidhyā*) as a tresure.'

It is stated in the Manusmruthi that that student should not be taught who is neither attentive nor devoted and who misuses his *vidhyā* (that is employs it to purposes that militate against dharma). All *Dharma Śāsthrā* give the terrible warning that one who teaches a student for money without bothering about his fitness will go to hell.

No Caste Bias

You will realize from one of the ideals we have placed before ourselves that in ancient times education had no caste bias. It is proof of the importance given in the past to acquiring knowledge. Taking a liberal view, the *Dharma Śāsthrās* permit people belonging to one caste learning from another the *vidhyā* they (the former) do not posses now, or have lost.

Dharma grows out of works on knowledge. Indeed the purpose of such works is to help dharma. So the two (dharma and knowledge) should not be treated as two separate entities.

Suppose most of the learned Brahmins of a place have been wiped out by foreign invaders or by barbarians or suppose for some reason the learning of the Brahmins of a particular locality has become extinct. During such times of danger and crisis the Brahmins concerned may learn even the *Vēdhās* from *Kshathriyās* or *Vaiśyās*.

It is a sign of wisdom to find out the true meaning of a subject irrespective of who teaches it or who speaks about it. Thus we must not reject a *vidhyā* outright without considering the possibility that it might contain something valuable. In the same way we should not dismiss others from whom we might gain knowledge exclaiming. 'Aha, are we to learn from these unworthy men? Am I to listen to such a man?' Instead, our approach should be : 'It does not matter who speaks about a subject. If there is anything of value in the talk we will accept it.' These worthy attitudes are supported and encouraged in the *Dharma Sāsthrās*.

Of course, one might, under some false pretext, learn unworthy things trying to satisfy oneself in this manner. 'Let me see if there is something of interest in it.' However, it is not easy to learn something without making an assessment of its aspects, about its 'high' and 'low'. This point is particularly stressed in the *śāsthrās*.

Here is an interesting story from the *Mahābhāratā*. A rishi burns down a stork in his anger. Thereafter it so happens that he learns aspects of dharma from a woman and, at her bidding, the rest of the dharma from a butcher. No better proof is needed than this story to illustrate that our forefathers were ready to listen to anyone to acquire knowledge and wisdom.

Vidhyā and The Fourth Caste

There were a number of people belonging to the fourth *varṅa* who were learned enough to teach Brahmins. The *Dharma Śāsthrās* declare : 'You may go and learn from them.' One truth becomes apparent from this. Contrary to the belief prevalent today, Brahmins did not keep members of the fourth caste in darkness. Nor were the latter segregated. It is true that they were not taught the *Vēdhās* directly. But Brahmins taught them the *śāsthrās* pertaining to their various occupations. And, apart from this, they were also given *upadēśa* in dharma and *jnānā*. It was mainly through the *Purāṅās* that such *upadēśa* was imparted. There were many individuals belonging to the fourth caste who were well versed in dharma and *Āthma vidhyā*. Such Brahmins as were not sufficiently learned were taught by them.

There is a fine example to illustrate how knowledge was acquired from members of non-Brahmin castes. *Bhagawān Vyāsa* propagated the *Vēdhās* through his Brahmins disciples. And he taught the *Purāṅās* to a non-Brahmin, *Rōmaharshṅa*, Sūthar, and sent him out to propagate them. The illustrious Brahmin rishis of *Naimiśāraṅyā* treated him with great respect gave him a seat of honour, and learned the *Purāṅās* from him.

The Supreme Gift of Knowledge

Our forefathers believed that of all the acts of public welfare or philanthropy there was nothing to equal the imparting of *vidhyā* to the deserving, to the right or virtuous person. It is lauded again and again as '*vidhyā dhānā*'. From the very use of the word *dhānā* it is evident that the *āchāryā* is not to look for any material gain from teaching.

Dealing with the subject, the Manusmruthi observes: 'The worthiest of *dhānās* are called *athidhānās*. Godhānā, bhudhānā and *vidhyā dhānā* (gift of cows, land, learning) all three are *athidhānās*. *Annadhānā* (gift of food) is also praised highly. But *vidhyā dhānā*, which is food for the mind, is higher than the dhānā for the stomach. Thnere are many *vidhyā*-s. Making a gift of these is a noble dhānā. But the highest of *vidhyā*-s is Brahma-*vidhyā*. No praise is sufficient for the gift of Brahma-*vidhyā*. He who makes a gift of this *vidhyā* not only earns the svarga of the gods (abode of the celestials) but is 'severed from all connections with samsārā (worldly life) and attains oneness with the *Paramāthman* (that is he attains *Mōkshā*.)'

Length of Terms

It is customary to have a twelve-year course in our present-day *Vēdha-pātaśālās*, It needs eight years, in addition, to learn the *Bhāshyas* thoroughly and grasp their meaning. The period of education in the old days was determined by the mental capacity of the student as also according to the subjects he wished to learn. The shortest was nine years. Twelve years became the general practice. Some courses lasted eighteen years and some others thirty-six years. According to the Manusmruthi, there were courses that had no restrictions with regard to their length - a student could study even for lifetime. The *Dharma Śāsthrās* permit a man to dedicate himself to learning throughout his entire life as a *brahmachārin*. A student was discharged from the obligation of observing *āśrama*-dharma only after his guru had tested him and satisfied himself that he was of exceptional intelligence. Such a student was called a *naishtika*, a *naishtika brahmachārin*.

For academic purposes the year was divided into two terms. The first was of about five months, the second of about seven months. The first term was called *upākarmā* and the second uthsarjanam or uthsarga. For some people the term *upākarmā* will bring to mind *Āvaṇiyavittam* - that is the day on which the sacred thread is changed every year. For *Rig vēdhins* this day of *upākarmā* occurs in the lunar month of *Śrāvaṇa* under the āstērism of *Śrāvaṇa*. For Tamils the month of *Śrāvaṇa* is between the new moon day of Ādi and the newmoon day of *Āvani*. '*Āvani*' is derived from *Śrāvaṇi*. For *Yajur Vēdhins upākarmā* is on the full moon day of the month of *Śrāvaṅa*. *Rig vēdhins* fix the day (as mentioned before) under the āstērism of *Śrāvaṅā*, *Yajur Vēdhins* according to the thithi of *pūrnimā*.

In the hoary past the full moon in the month of *Śrāvaṅa* occurred without fail under the āstērism of *Śrāvaṅa*. That is precisely the reason why the month '*Śrāvaṅa*' is so called (that is the month in which the full moon transits the āstērism *Śrāvaṅa*). During the period when, every year, the full moon and the *Śrāvaṅa* āstērism came together both *Rig vēdhins* and *Yajur Vēdhins* commenced their term of *upākarmā* on the same day. Later, as a result of a shift in the movements of heavenly bodies, in the month of *Śrāvaṅa* when the full moon fell under the āstērism of *Śravishta* (Avittam in Tamil). *Yajur Vēdhins* began to observe the commencement of *upākarmā* on the full moon day. The *Dharma Śāsthrās* have it that the *upākarmā* must be observed on the full moon day of the *Śrāvaṅa* month. So *Yajur Vēdhins* gave greater importance to the thithi (date according to the moon), that is the full moon (*Pūrnimā*) in this case, than to the āstērism or nakshthra.

This is what we call '*Āvani* Avittam' or '*Āvaṅiyavittam*' in Tamil.

Rig vēdhins, not minding the thithi (date) - the full moon - continued to observe the commencement of their *upākarmā* on the day of the *Śrāvaṅa* āstērism. So it has been the practice until today. That is why those in the know of things call *upākarmā* '*Śrāvaṅa*'. So the Rig vēdhi *upākarmā* has no connection with the *Śravishta* (Avittam) āstērism but, since *Yajur Vēdhins* predominate in the South, even *Rig vēdhins* call their *upākarmā* '*Āvaṅiyavittam*.'

In certain years, even in these times, the full moon day of the month of *Śrāvaṅa*, coincides with the *Śrāvaṅa* āstērism. On such occasions both *Rig vēdhins* and *Yajur Vēdhins* observe *upākarmā* on the same day.

Sāma Vēdhins observe their *upākarmā* one month later, that is under the āstērism of Hastha in the month of *Bhādrapada*. It usually occurs on *Ganēsha* Chaturthi or one day before or after that. According to the *śāsthrās*, if Hastha and Panchami of the moon come together, the day is particularly good. During the time when the full moon day of the month of *Śrāvańa* happened to fall under the āstērism of *Śrāvańa*, in the month of *Bhādrapada*, the āstērism of Hastha was conjoined with the Panchami of the waxing moon.

The term '*upākarmā*' itself is not known to many people. (Indeed it may be that many people do not know the *Vēdhā* to which they belong). Even those who must have heard the term *upākarmā* perhaps think that it is a day on which the soiled sacred thread is changed. Actually, changing the sacred thread is a minor rite of *upākarmā*.

'*Upākarmā*' does not in fact refer just to one day. It is the commencement of an entire term of five or six months. During this term students learn the basic *Vēdhic* lessons from their *āchāryās*: what is called *Sruthi*, including the Samhithās, the *Brāhmanās*, *Āranyakās*, the Upanishads, etc. These lessons continue until the beginning of the month of Pushya (Thai in Tamil). (Pushya is also called 'Taisa'. 'Thai' is derived from 'Taisa'). On that day, that is the beginning of Pushya, the study of the *Vēdhā* is concluded with the ceremony of uthsarjana. This must be performed either on the full moon day of Pushya or on the day falling under the āstērism *Rohińi* before that.

Since Sāma Vēdhins have their *upākarmā* in *Bhādrapada* (Purattasi in Tamil), they have their adhyayana term for five months or a minimum of four and half months. They have their uthsarjana on the full moon day of the month of Magha - Magha *Pūrnimā* usually comes fifteen days after the new moon day of the month of Pushya.

Uthsarjana and *visarjānā* mean the same thing - that is discontinuance of adhyayana and adhyāpana (learning and teaching) of the *Vēdhās*. Seven months later, on the next *upākarmā*, the *Vēdhic* lessons must be recommenced from where they were discontinued. 'Upakramaṇam' means to start something - that is why the *Vēdhic* ceremony performed on the commencement of adhyayana-adhyāpana is called *upākarmā*.

The second term is the seven-month period during which there are no new *Vēdhic* lessons. During these months the six Vēdāngās are taught - *Śikshā*, Vyākaraṇa, Chandas, Niruktha, jyōtishā and Kalpa. Other subjects are also taught during this term. The teaching and learning of such subjects are discontinued on the eve of *upākarmā* and the study of the *Vēdhā* is recommenced. After the uthsarjana, the Vēdhāngās, poetry and other subjects are taught from where they were left before. In the North the uthsarjana day is called Saraswathi Pūjā or Vasanta Panchami.

Nowadays feasting has become more important than anything else in the performance of *Āvaṇiyavittam* (*upākarmā*). The first *sūktha* of the *Vēdhās* - the *Vēdhās* which are meant to be studied for a whole term - is chanted by the priest and the others (the Brahmins performing *upākarmā*) repeat the same in a faulty manner. The uthsarjana ceremony is also performed on the same day with the priest chanting one sūthrā from each *Vēdhānga* and the others repeating it again in a faulty manner. (Indeed the participating Brahmins do not even know that the priest is conducting the uthsarjana ceremony). Somehow they have not done the uthsarjana of the *upākarmā* function itself! It may be for the sake of feasting. We have now come to the unfortunate stage of making a mockery of ourselves.

The *brahmachārin* learns the *Vēdhās* and the Vēdhāngās and other subjects in alternating terms and completes his education in twelve years. The *gurukulavāsā* may extend up to 18 or 36 years when the student learns not only his own *Vēdha-śākhā* but also other *Vēdhās* (one who knows two *Vēdhās* is a *Dvivēdhin*; three *Vēdhās*, *Trivēdhin;* four *Vēdhās*, *Chathurvēdhin*) and, apart from the *Chathur Vēdhās*, also the Vēdhāngās. He teaches members of other castes the *vidhyā* they are emtitled to learn and also specializes in some branch of learning.

Why Upākarmā for Gruhasthās?

If *upākarmā* and uthsarjana are connected with education why are they not confined to *brahmachārins*? Why have the *śāsthrās* enjoined householders to perform them?

According to the *śāsthrās*, it is a Brahmin's duty to do adhyāpana after his adhyayana (he must become a teacher after completing his studies). When a Brahmin teaches a *brahmachārin* he has to commence and conclude each term with *upākarmā* and uthsarjana ceremonies. In this way he makes himself and his student pure. Even if he does not teach anybody after becoming a householder, is it not necessary for him to retain what he has learned? For that purpose he must divide the year into two terms and again memorise what he has learned. In this manner the householder too has to perform *upākarmā* and uthsarjana.

In the *Dharma Śāsthrās* *upākarmā* and uthsarjana are mentioned in the section dealing with the dharma of *gruhasthās*, not of *brahmachārins*.

At one time education itself was a 'tapasya' performed in the worship of *Īśwarā*. It commenced with *Brahmōpadēśa* and concluded after the observance of a number of vratas (vows). The rite signifying the conclusion of studies is called *samāvarthana*. The *brahmachārin* is to marry and settle down in the *āśrama* of the householder only after this ceremony. How *upākarmā* is to be performed by one who has had his *samāvarthana* and how it is to be performed by one who has not had his *samāvarthana* are described in some Smruthis. From this it is clear that even a householder has to perform these rites. Some rishis who are authors of Smruthis clearly state that the gruhastha too must do his adhyayana as a student so that he does not forget what he has learned. This is called dhāraṅa.

Holidays :

When there are two terms in the *Vēdhic* academic year, are there no holidays? Yes, there are. Our forefathers were not lacking in loving tenderness for children. They gave them days of rest and did not tie them down to studies all through the year. The days when there is no learning or adhyayana are called *'anadhyāyana'* days. There are six such days every month - the full moon day, the new moon day, *Ashtami* or the eight day and Chathurdasi or the fourteenth day of the waxing and waning moons. In addition, every year, after the *upākarmā* and uthsarjana terms there are three days of *anadhyāyana*. Also there are four other holidays in a year called *'Chāthurmāsī.'*

All these are regular holidays occurring every year according to the almanach. So they are called 'nithya anadhyāyana' days. Apart from these, there are holidays that cannot be fixed according to the almanac but are declared for some special reason ('naimiththika'). For instance when it rains heavily, when there is a storm, when there is a fire in the forest, when the gurukula is attacked by dacoits. On such days there would be no lessons, so says the *Dharma Šāsthrā* of Manu with human sympathy and understanding.

Eclipses do not occur on fixed days of the year. So the days on which they fall are naimiththika holidays. (During eclipses there should be no teaching but the *manthrās* learned should be *muttered.* Japa done during eclipses is more efficacious than at other times).

Is It Right To Beat A Student?

Here one must add what the *Dharma Śāsthrās* have to say about how the *āchāryās* are to conduct themselves towards their students.

It is generally agreed that, on the pretext of showing affection, the student should not be pampered and spoiled. It is for this reason that a child, instead of being taught at home, was sent to the gurukula. The student was bound by the *śāsthrās* to conduct himself according to the wishes and instructions of his *āchāryā* and he was not to live according to his own whims or will. However, for this reason, nowhere is it mentioned that the *āchāryā* should be stern with him all the time with a severe face. The message of the *śāsthrās* is that, while treating the disciple with affection and consideration, the *āchāryā* should keep him disciplined and not allow him to become self-willed. If you examine our texts ranging from the Upanishads to the *Purāṇās* you will find many examples of the bond of affection between the guru and his disciple. But this bond of affection in no way detracted from the discipline with which the student was bound.

By speaking to him sweetly and by treating him with affection the guru had to take his student on the path of progress. You will realize the sweetness of this relationship between the guru and his disciple from the fact that the guru addressed his śishyā as 'Saumya'.

The student should not be beaten, according to the Smruthi of Gautama. Though, in later times, the world *Sikshā* itself came to mean punishment, the rule at first was that there was to be no punishment during the time of teaching. Notwithstanding this, beating the student might have become unavoidable at times.

There is a saying, 'If you don't beat the cow it will not yield milk.' Or, 'Even a brother doesn't help as much as beating.' 'Spare the rod and spoil the child,' is a well-known English saying.

When a student had to be punished, he was to be beaten with a short length of rope or cane, not with a whip or a stick of the tamarind tree. He was to be beaten if at all, on the back, and beating on any other part of the body, especially the head, is forbidden by the Manusmruthi.

The *śāsthrās* pay attention to the smallest detail in education and give useful advice on each. The underlying idea is that, throughout his period of education, the student should remain disciplined and that, towards this end, he must keep his senses and urges under control.

Qualities Of A Student

Manu lays emphasis on the observance of *brahmacharyā* by the student. He calls this 'indirya samyama' (control of the senses). How is this rule of *brahmacharyā* significant? The goal of education, says Manu, is not merely the 'understanding of the *Vēdhās*', that is the attainment of knowledge, but the uplift of the Āthman. That is why *vidhyā*bhyasa or education is described as a vrata (sacred vow) and as tapasya (austerity).

Manu also clearly defines the daily duties of the student. Sandhyā-vandhanā. Agnihōthra (*samidādhānā* in the case of the *brahmachārin*), *svādhyāyā* or learning one's lessons properly and memorising them; begging for alms (*bhikshācharyā*); drawing water and gathering *samid* for the *āchāryā* as also bringing clay and flowers for his Pūjā. The student must, in all humility, request his teacher to lecture on a subject (pravachana) and make the subject clear to him. So goes the description of śishyā-dharma or duties of the student. *Svādhyāyā* and pravachana should on no account be given up, says the *Thaithirīya* Upanishad.

Promoting Health

In all this it must be noted that, apart from the emphasis on improving knowledge and character, importance is also given to health. Rising early in the morning, bathing in cool water, performing *prāṅayāma* and Sūrya-namaskāra - such habits will help to enhance not only keenness of intellect but bodily health and purity of heart. By performing duties like bringing *samid* for the guru the student learns to be humble and makes his body strong.

A human being has three constituents - the body, the intellect, the Āthman. The education system of old ensured the soundness and proper growth of all three.

I have spoken to you at length about the education system prevalent in our land in ancient times. Yet there may be some features not known to me.

Individual Teachers Mostly :

Under the Buddhists and the *Jainās* in later times, schools, bigger and larger in number appeared than before. There were big schools in earlier times teaching a number of subjects like the ones mentioned in the *Chāndōgya* Upanishad. However, most of them were under individual *āchāryās* who were responsible to one group of students. The life of such teachers was interwoven with that of their students. The *āchāryā*s were able to pay attention to each student individually and, apart from imparting knowledge, they inculcated good qualities in him.

In a federal set-up there are a number of autonomous state governments under a central authority. In our system of education individual teachers looking after groups of students were like the autonomous states. All teachers and students were under the control of the kulapathi. The kulapathi, through the example of his high conduct and qualities, was able to bring all of them under his discipline and ensure their good conduct. Education did not mean merely the acquiring of knowledge nor was it a means of earning a liveslihood. And if it cut out the path of fulfilment of the Āthman it was because the kulapathi, apart from the power of his very presence, supervised the conduct of students, constantly keeping an eye on them.

At the apex was the kulapathi. In big gurukulās it was the practice to have teachers each of whom was responsible for one batch. Small gurukulās under individual *āchāryā* were more common in ancient times. In other words, education under the care of individual gurus had greater importance than under institutions.

From olden times it was natural for students to achieve progress in their respective fields by studying in various gurukulās and under various individual teachers. Until recently, there were students who had their *gurukulavāsā* under various gurus - Mīmāmsā under one guru, *Nyāya* under another and *Vēdhānthā* under a third and so on. Even today there must be students, though not large in number, who must be learning under several gurus. There is also the practice of studying even one *śāsthrā* under more than one guru - one section of it under one guru, another under a second guru.

The point to be noted is that all such *āchāryā*s were not members of one gurukula. Each taught individually in his own gurukula. It was not a system of education according to which a number of gurus taught on an institutional basis but one in which individual teachers taught students on the basis of their own qualifications, excellence of conduct and character.

The Individual Teacher and His Greatness :

A teacher, who is not part of an institution, has perforce to remain pure of character and conduct so as to attract students.

Will any father send his little son to a guru, however learned he be, if he is not of noble character and is not a man of compassion? After all, the boy as to spend ten or twelve years in the gurukula, years during which both his body and mind will have to be shaped for the better.

Drawbacks of Institutional Education

An institution consisting of many people will be mixed in character. Its shortcomings will not be obvious as they will be in the case of an individual. If you make a garland consisting of the same flowers you will be able to spot the bad or foul-smelling flower in it easily and discard it. But if a garland is made of different kinds of flowers you will not be able to recognize the bad flowers that are mixed with the good ones. To take an example from cooking: the aubergines or 'brinjals' are full of seeds; the broad beans are overripe. So it is suggested: don't make any dish separately of either of the two vegetables. Use them in 'aviyal' (dish of mixed vegetables). When an individual object or commodity is spoiled or goes rancid you recognize it immediately and throw it away. However, if there are broken bits of things, pieces of a mirror or glass, or bits of useless plastic and rags you make dolls out of them or other attractive objects. You read about such tings in the papers.

Institutions will never be able to shape the character of students and nurture their intelligence in the same way as individual gurus. They will be able only to test the people's knowledge and help him to improve it, but not his character or conduct. When an individual guru resides with a student, makes him work for him and feeds him, he will be able to mould his character also.

Nowadays, when a child is admitted to school only his intelligence is tested. There is no room in the present system either to test a student's character or to improve it. Nor can a child whose character cannot be mended be rejected. In our old system education which did not shape the character of the pupil was not considered education at all. The Lord declares towards the end of the *Bhāgavad gītā*. 'na atapaskāya, na abhaktāya, na *aśuśrūshavē* (never should you teach this to one who is not austere, one who is devoid of devotion and one who does not serve').

According to the *śāsthrās*, subjects of great import should not be taught without having kept the student in the gurukula for more than one year and without being satisfied about his character and conduct. Such restrictions or ideas have no place in an institution like the present-day school. That is why our education system has led to much evil because it is exclusively devoted to the nurturing of knowledge and intelligence and the advancement of subjects not all of which are likely to be beneficial to mankind.

I spoke about students being given their first lessons after they were tested for a period of more than one year. But suppose a boy is found unfit after such a test. Can a teacher, finding him hard-working like a draught animal, extract work from him without teaching him instead of sending him home? According to the *śāsthrās* if a teacher keeps a boy, not fit to be taught, for selfish reasons or for something else, the sin of the youngster will accure to him. The sins committed by a boy after he becomes a student will be visited upon the guru for his failure to correct him and put him on the right path. A guru will incur sin by not accepting a boy as a student also. The responsibilities of the guru are indeed great. There are stories of rishis who kept their students in their gurukulās without teaching them for many years because they wanted to make known to the world their devotion and character.

Education given by an individual teacher, instead of an institution, benefits the teacher as much as the taught. When an individual (who is not part of an institution) wants to excel as a teacher it becomes imperative for him to perfect himself.

Examples in the Upanishads

If we scan our ancient texts we will come to know how the gurus who conducted the gurukulās described above were men of noble character, men inspired by affection for their students. Without caring for profit, these gurus had other people's children residing with them for years and they exerted themselves to the utmost so that the *Vēdhās* would be handed down to posterity and for the well-being of the world. It is a matter of great pride that such gurus have appeared in our land from generation to generation.

When someone approaches a guru and tells him in all sincerity, 'I have come to you to become your disciple,' the guru accepts him and teaches him all that he knows without caring for any profit. This idea is expressed in the Brahadārañyaka Upanishad (6-2) in the passage dealing with the *upadēsa* given to Gautama by the king Pravāhaña.

In another version of the story in the *Chāndōgya* Upanishad (5-3) it is the disciple who spurns wordly things. He says: 'I want only *vidhyā*; nothing else. I will not accept anything else. Raja Pravāhaña tells Gautama: 'O *Bhagawān* Gautama, ask for worldly goods. I will grant them whatever their quantity'. Gautama replies. 'I don't want any of it. I want that *vidhyā* which I do not know and which you know.' Here we have an example of a rishi who is addressed as '*Bhagawān*', going to a Kshathriya seeking *vidhyā*. It is clear that with regard to learning the Truth the Brahmins of those times were humble and without any ego. The saying 'The pot filled to the brim will not spill over,' is illustrated here.

Gautama's son Svētakētu was somewhat conceited by nature. When a man is haughty how could he be taught any *vidhyā*? Gautama, to test Svētakētu, puts him questions (on *Āthma-vidhyā* and makes him realize his ignorance. Thus, after his ego is erased or subdued, Gautama teaches his son the Mahāvākyā that is still celebrated all over the world, the Mahāvākyā that proclaims the non-difference between the jīvā and the Brahman.

This story actually occurs later. Before it, it is Svētakētu who goes to the king Pravāhaṅa. He loses his temper simply because he is unable to answer the questions put by the king. He returns to his father and tells him. 'Some low character, a Kshathriya, asked me all sorts of questions.' Such behaviour is characteristic of one who is half-baked. Gautama, on the contrary, is learned and humble and he thinks to himself: 'Ah, these are things that I should learn.' So he goes to the king and asks him for *upadēsa*.

On another occasion five great scholars, noted for their life of *Vēdhic* discipline, come to the same Gautama to find out all about the '*Vaiśvānara*-Āthman'. (This is proof of how even great srauthis were untiring in their search of *vidhyā*),... Gautama does not pretend to know the answer. With an open mind, he admits that he has no answer to the question put by the scholars and directs them to Asvapati, king of Kēkaya.

There is a similar story in another Upanishad (*Praśna*) from which also we learn about certain great truths. Five great men, *Sukēśā*, *Sathyakāmā*, and others are seekers of the Brahman, steeped in the Brahman as they are, they are 'Brahmaparas' and *'Brahmaṅistās'* Distinguished, though they be, they go in all humility to the great sage *Pippalādhā*, *samid* in hand, in search of real *vidhyā* and the Truth. They offer the *samid* to the rishi and request him to give them *upadēśā*. *Pippalādhā* decides that however great they be they must be tested so that people will learn a lesson - apart from the lesson of the *Vēdhās*, lessons of real life must also be taught. He tells them: 'Come back with *śraddhā* (faith) after a year practicing *brahmacharyā* and performing austerities. I will then give you the answer to your questions. You may ask any questions you like.' ('*Yathā kāmam*' according to your wish, so says the Upanishad). 'I will answer them to the extent I can' These words reveal the humility of *Pippalādhā*.

The one-year period of austerities that he asks the five to observe was to test their humility. If you go to a man believing him to be your guru you must accept that whatever he asks you to do is for your good. It is faith like this that is meant by *s̄raddhā*.

S̄raddhā, Paripras̄na

The Lord says in the *Gītā* (4-34) that one must receive *upadēs̄a* from *jnānins* who know the Reality. Five verses later (4-39), He declares: '*S̄raddhāvan labhate jnānam*' (the man of faith and attentiveness obtains *jnānā*). *Bhagawān* too here says that the disciple should go on probing the teacher, questioning him again and again. He uses the word '*paripras̄na*', '*Pras̄na*' by itself means knowledge acquired by putting questions to the teacher. By adding the prefix 'pari' the term means 'deep or through inquiry' (questioning again and again). This is not the same as the practice obtaining today of trying to find out whether the teacher knows his subject by asking him questions and trying to humiliate him! The purpose of *paripras̄na* is to inquire thoroughly into a subject so as to gain full understanding of it. The Lord uses two words along with '*paripras̄na*' to make the meaning clear. (These words convey a meaning which is contrary to the present day approach to the teacher). The word that comes before is '*pranī*Padham' making obeisance to the teacher' (by prostrating oneself) in an attitude of humble reverence.

The word that comes after '*paripras̄na*' is *'sēvā'*. It means that the student should serve the teacher. First the disciple must be humble, then he must serve his guru. The basis of all this is unshakeable faith in the teacher (*śraddhā*), implying that any *upadēśa* given by the guru is for the disciple's good. Only such students have been exhorted to learn by questioning their guru again and again.

Guru in whom such faith can be reposed can only be in gurukulās conducted by individual gurus, not in institutions. The student has always to live with such a guru and then only can he know the extent of his knowledge and his character. Whether it is a school or a college there are separate teachers for different subjects and they memorise some notes, go through the motions of teaching, and pretend to be learned men. In contrast, how was the Upanishadhic rishi, the Upanishadic teacher? When questioned on a subject, he said 'I will answer to the extent I can. *'Śishyā'* means one who has humility. Apart from the śishyā, who must be humility personified, here we have the guru also exemplifying the same quality.

If the guru and the disciple lived a simple life of harmony, it is because they were like members of the same family in the gurukula and they were united in heart. There were no secrets in their relationship and the one had nothing to hide from the other. How could there be such a heart-to-heart relationship between the guru and his disciple in a school run on an institutional basis? Because of such close relationship the guru opened out his mind to his student and laid bare all his intellectual gifts. To desersving students he emptied out all that he knew. To the scholars who had come to him for enlightenment, *Pippalādhā* said, 'I will answer your questions to the extent I know.' He added at the same time: 'I will tell you all that I know.' Thus he came forward to make a complete gift of all the *vidhyā* in his possession. We hear now a days that some teachers are afraid of their students excelling them. We also hear that some teachers claim what is written or prepared by their students as their own. The kinship obtaining in the gurukula and the affection and concern of the guru for his pupil will not be found in institutionalized education.

Testing Students

Just as grinding is done to make a gem more lustrous, so was the student constantly tested so as to make him shine in his studies and character. There were rishis who made students work without teaching them for long and purified them thus in the crucible of service.

There was for instance *Upakōsalā* who was a student of the guru Jabala Sathyakāmā. According to the 'syllabus' and 'curriculum' of those times, *Sathyakāmā* taught his students for twelve years the *Vēdhās*, the *sāsthrās*, etc. But he did not admit *Upakōsalā* alone to the lessons. For twelve years he entrusted him with the responsibility of looking after his (the rishis) Agnis, sacred fires. The boy never grumbled. For twelve long years he lived in the gurukula without attending any class and carrying out all his guru's wishes.

The practice was that, after the adhyayana had been completed and the *samskāra* called *samāvarthana* had been performed, the disciple was sent home from the gurukula. Thereafter he married and settled down to the *gruhastha āsrama* (householder's life). *Sathyakāmā* performed the *samāvarthana* of all his disciples except *Upakōsalā*. He neglected this pupil or seemed to neglect him.

Even then *Upakōsalā* remained patient, doing the work allotted him by his guru.

Gurupatni or guru's wife

Sathyakāmā's wife, who had all along noted how *Upakōsalā* had been treated by his guru, lost her patience. She said to her husband. 'This boy *Upakōsalā* has observed strict *brahmacharyā* and practiced tapasya. He has tended your sacred fires all these years. And I have never seen you teaching him. If you do not wish to earn the curse of these Agnis you must start teaching this porr boy from now onwards at least.' Thus she fought with the rishi for *Upakōśalā*.

This 'fight' has many implications for us. We learn a number of interesting things from what the rishis wife told her husband. First, she was more considerate to the students than was the guru considerate like a mother to the children who had come away from their homes.

We also find exemplified in her one of two types of *dharmapathnis*. Some *pathivrathās* (wives who are totally loyal and dedicated to their husbands) think that there must be full obedience to the husband irrespective of whether or not what he says or does is in keeping with dharma. *Nāḻāyini* was one such. For the sake of satisfying his desire she carried her sick and seedy husband to a place of ill fame. The other type of *pathivrathās* believes that it is her duty to remind her husband of what is morally right lest he suffer a lapse from dharma.

Sita, for instance, tells *Rāmā* when he is about to go to the forest without her. 'Is it not a woman's dharma not to be separated from her husband even if she suffers much while remaining with him? Have you not spoken of *sthrīdharma* (the code of conduct for women) and persuaded your mother to stay by the side of your father instead of accompanying you to the forest? That being so, does not the same dharma apply to me? Is it just on your part to ask me to remain here instead of accompanying you to the forest?' Arguing in this manner she succeeded in obtaining *Rāmā's* consent to her going with him to the forest.

It was not an idle warning that *Sathyakāmā's* wife gave her husband when she told him that he would incur the wrath of Agni.

In reality the divine powers were a living presence in the homes of rishis and, therefore, if the sages acted against dharma they would show their anger. *Sathyakāmā's* wife was truly worried that.because *Upakōsalā* had remained untaught for so many years, her husband would incur the curse of Agni. Another point arising from this account is that the Agnis in *Sathyakāmā's* āsrama were a powerful living force as we will notice later in the story.

Regardless of his wife's warning, *Sathyakāmā* went out, as if he wanted to test *Upakōsalā* still further. As for the student he was agitated by the thought that his guru did not listen to his wife. He was also pained that, because of him, differences had developed between the guru and his wife. Worrying about all this he could not even take his food. The guru's wife, in her anxiety, asked him why he had not eaten. He replied : 'It's due to illness of the mind. I have no appetite for food.'

Taught By Divine Powers, But .....

It was then that the Agnis who had been tended with such care by *Upakōsalā*, revealed themselves. 'Poor boy, he has served us so faithfully and now he suffers so much that he cannot even eat. Without any further delay we must give him *upadēsa* ourselves,' so they decided among themselves. They gave *upadēsa* to *Upakōsalā* - first all the three Agnis together and then each individually taught him Agni-*vidhyā* and *Āthma-vidhyā*.

The Agnis thought that, if they gave *Upakōsalā* all *upadēsa*., it would mean that he did not need his guru. The importance of the guru, they felt, should in no way be diminished. So they stopped with giving the boy the philosophical part of the Agni-*vidhyā* and *Āthma-vidhyā* and said to him: 'Dear child, from now your *āchāryā* has to teach you how to have realization of these *vidhyā*-s and tell you the procedure and technique for the purpose.'

The *āchāryā* returned home, calling '*Upakōsalā*'. The student responded with 'O *Bhagwān*' and stood before him. The Upanishad subtly points out here that, though the guru had severely tested *Upakōsalā* and the boy had suffered in mind, the bond of affection between the two had not weakened a bit.

The guru looked at the boy. The boy's face shone with thējas (lustre). *Sathyakāmā* guessed what had happened and asked him: 'Dear child, who gave you *upadēsa*?' Fear took hold of *Upakōsalā*, the fear that perhaps it had been wrong on his part to have received *upadēsa* in the guru's absence. Also he was puzzled as to whether he should inform the guru about the Agnis who had so kindly given him *upadēsa*. He thought that he should not hide anything from his guru and that, at the same time, he should not tell him all that had happened. He decided that he must tell the teacher with circumspection what had transpired in his absence. He said : 'Who else, swāmi, who else would have given me *upadēsa*? Only these Agnis gave it. They were not like what they look now. They looked somewhat different then.'

Upakōsalā now came out successful in his guru's final test also. *Sathyakāmā* had gone out deliberately knowing in his mind that a stage had been reached when the Agnis, unable to wait any longer, would give his student *upadēsa*. What was the reason for his acting in this manner? Earlly in *Sathyakāmā's* own life he had gone through a similar experience.

(And this is the story.) *Sathyakāmā's upanayanā* was performed by a rishi called Hāridhurma Gauthama. One day Hāridhurma Gauthama asked *Sathyakāmā* to tend some 400 heads of emaciated cattle. The disciple said to himself: 'I will return to my guru only after these cattle which are skin and bone are fed well. I will wait until the cows calve and there are 1,000 head of cattle.' It took many years for *Sathyakāmā's* resolve to become fulfilled.

As the *brahmachārin Sathyakāmā* returned with the cattle to the gurukula after the lapse of so many years, one of the bulls in the herd gave him *upadēśā*. On the following day Agni gave him *upadēśa* and on the two subsequent days a hamsa and a waterbird called madgu did the same. *Sathyakāmā*, by virtue of the *upadēśa* received from all these, became lustrous in the same way as *Upakōśalā* now. Hāridhurma asked him the same question that *Sathyakāmā* was to put to *Upakōśalā* later. *Sathyakāmā* answered it with the same tact and circumspection with which *Upakōśalā* was to answer it later. He said to Hāridhurma 'No human being gave me *upadēśa*.' He declared that he wanted *Hāridruma* alone to be his guru.

The indispensability of the *āchāryā* is underlined here. The message is : 'Only that *vidhyā* will bear the highest fruit which is given directly by word of mouth by the *āchāryā*.' Thinking perhaps that it would be impertinent to make such an observation himself *Sathyakāmā* merely said : 'What I have gathered from great men like you is the lesson that only that *vidhyā* will bear the highest fruit which has been learnt from the guru.'

The Upanishads throughout illustrate the ideal of guru-śishyā relationship.

From the story of *Sathyakāmā*, the student, let us return to the story of *Sathyakāmā*, the teacher. He had known from his own experience that even if he had not given *upadēśa* to *Upakōśalā* certain divine powers would give it. He now wanted to find out how the pupil would behave after receiving *upadēśa* from the divine powers. There was no need for the disciple to tolerate the indifference of his guru any more. He could still receive all *upadēśa* from the divine powers. *Sathyakāmā* wanted to find out whether *Upakōśalā* would think thus and become conceited. 'If he is going to have his adhyayana completed here, let me see whether he will be proud about the *upadēśa* he has received from Agni. Let me test him.' Such were the thoughts of *Sathyakāmā*.

Upakōsalā passed this test with distinction, as they say, and his guru was pleased. 'What *upadēsa* did the Agnis give you?' he asked his disciple. *Upakōsalā* told the guru all about it. *Sathyakāmā* blessed him and made up for his past neglect by giving him *upadēsa* himself. The *upadēsa* given by the Agnis had been incomplete and now the guru made it complete.

Independent Thinking

What was the function of the guru in ancient times? Unlike what obtains at present he was not satisfied with giving some lectures and 'covering the portion' before going home for the day in peace. The guru (in the old days) again and again tested the student and moulded his character, making him chaste in heart and mind. It was only after making sure about his character that he nurtured his student's intelligence and knowledge. There is nothing more dangerous for a man than that he should possess intelligence without character.

The gurus then knew the sort of *upadēsa* needed by a student according to his stage of development. Much thought went into how the boy was to be raised from one stage to the next. The guru imparted *vidhyā* progressively. Bhrugu received his education from his father Varuṅa. At first when he was not mature enough his father taught him, basing his lesson on the premise that the *annamayakōsa,* that is the body, was the Truth or Reality. Then he made him perform austerities until the boy realized the unreality of the body. Later Varuṅa based his lesson on the premise that the *prāṅamayakōsa* was the truth. Thus making him perform austerities again and again - that is by developing the awareness of the Self by degrees - he revealed to his disciple the final Truth. 'The *prāṅā* (the vital force) is not the Reality but the manas (the mind); the manas is not the Reality but *vijnānā* (knowledge, understanding); no, higher than all this, existing by itself, in the form of Ananda (Bliss), is the Āthman and that is the Truth, the Reality.'

Is it possible to teach a student in an institution in this manner - teach him according to the stages of his development, raising him step by step?

There is another important thing to be noted. Montessori and other educationists say : 'Children should be left to learn by themselves as they work. In the same way, they must be free to think for themselves and learn for themselves. Everything now is taught from books and the child merely memorises his lessons.'

When the guru entrusts to his student the preliminary work relating to sacrifices, the latter has the opportunity of doing and learning things for himself. So far as the other castes are concerned they learn their craft or trade by watching their father or grandfather work. According to our *śāsthrās* there is room for such practical learning in our system of education. And just as the students were directly involved in work and encouraged to gain practical knowledge of their subject, there was scope in our old method of education for students to think for themselves and become enlightened. The story of Bhrugu is proof of this. Varuṅa who was both Bhrugu's father and guru encouraged his son to think for himself and realize the Truth.

There are a number of stories in which the guru gives *upadēśa* and asks the disciple to go and perform austerities, that is to meditate on his *upadeśa*. On the disciple's return the guru asks him to speak about his understanding of the *upadēśa*.

Here is another story. It is also from the *Chāndōgya* Upanishad (8th chapter). There was an asura called *Virōchanā* who believed that there was no Truth beyond the body. But even he was helped by Prajāpathi to engage himself in philosophical inquiry, although he came to the wrong conclusion that the body was the

Truth. The point to note is that unlike the idlers and gossips in our midst to day who do no thinking at all, the asura was at least made to think for himself and arrive at some concept, erroneous though it was. Gurus in the olden days did not reject students and accepted them in the belief that it would be worthwhile to try and bring about some improvement in them however small it be. The story of *Virōchanā* is proof.

When someone was accepted as a disciple, even if he was good for nothing, the guru tried to make him acquire some quality or other. According to the Upanishad, *Virōchanā*, though an asura, obeyed the bidding of Prajāpathi and observed *brahmacharyā* for thirty-two years to help him in his philosophical quest.

Indra, king of the *Dēvās*, was also, like *Virōchanā*, a student of Prajāpathi and he too wanted to know the Reality. However, unlike *Virōchanā*, he did not stop at the stage of knowledge in which the body seemed to him to the Truth. As we saw in the story of Bhrugu, unable to find fulfilment in bodily pleasures, he came again to Prajāpathi. To test his fitness to know the truth beyond bodily pleasures, Prajāpathi kept him in his āsrama for thirty-two years asking him to observe *brahmacharyā* during the period. Great truths are taught only after a student is kept under the discipline of strict vows even if he be some one so distinguished as the king of the *Dēvās*. Indra spent 101 years in all controlling his senses and Prajāpathi taught him at last the ultimate *Āthma-taththva*.

To care for students with total attention is extremely difficult. It places a great burden and responsibility on the shoulders of the guru. The disciple might even be irritated by such attention on the part of the teacher. Gurus in ancient times devoted themselves to teaching without expecting any reward. Their goal was the spread of *vidhyā*. And spreading *vidhyā* meant educating the deserving. To teach the deserving alone would mean putting the student to the severest of tests. The criterion for enrolment would be not intelligence alone but character and good-naturedness also. Gurus in the old days realized that, as far as possible, the student must be made deserving of knowledge stage by stage.

Even the great lord of the *Dēvās*, Indra, had no escape from this strict system. Why, the asura king *Virōchanā* was also similarly bound by it and it shows the keen interest taken in the propagation of *vidhyā* in those days. More remarkable, as we learn from the stories told above, the *āchāryā* belonged to such a high plane and possessed such noble qualities that the students thought to themselves. 'The guru is entitled to be strict with it. To submit to so noble a guru, a teacher who is so highly qualified, will result in our well-being. We do not stand to lose anything.'

There is one more important point to note. Who is an *uththama-purushā* (man belonging to the highest category?) Is it enough for a man so called to lead a chaste and blameless life? Is it sufficient for him to be honest and austere and be without any passion? A man possessing such qualities will earn the respect and devotion of other people. But will he attract students, students who would like to reside in his gurukula with him? If a man is austere, remarkably intelligent and uncompromisingly honest you will feel compelled to make obeisance to him from a distance. You will not wish to live in his home with him. To persuade the student to stay with the guru, the latter must have, apart from all other qualities, a loving heart and mind. He must also be a man of grace and compassion. Of all the qualities of an *uththama-purushā* his loving nature, grace and compassion count as the foremost. It is love or affection that is transformed into divine power, the compassion that has the capacity to protect. Such love or compassion is termed aruḻ in Tamil and 'anugraha' in Sanskrit.

Krishñā and His Āchāryā

Our *śāsthrās* and *Purāñās* tell us that our *āchāryā* in olden times, endowed as they were with grace and compassion, were ideal men. That the bond of affection between the guru and the pupil should ever remain strong and constant without diminishing was the prayer uttered through *manthrās* at the very beginning of the lessons. The Upanishadic prayer in the beginning and conclusion of the daily lesson is: 'May we, the guru and the śishyā, ever remain without ill-will for one another.' 'The hand that beats also embraces:' the *āchāryā*s of the past exemplified the truth of this saying. They were strict when the occasion demanded strictness, and they poured out their affection when the occasion demanded affection. We realize this when we read the *Bhāgavatha-Purāñā*.

Bhagawān Krishñā himself reminds *Kuchēla* (*Sudhāmā*) of the days when they lived together in the gurukula. After slaying *Kamsā* and after their *upanayanā* was performed, *Krishñā* and Balarāmā went for *gurukulavāsā* to the Brahmin *Sāndīpani's* āśrama. *Krishñā* is the source of all knowledge, all *vidhyā*. However, an example was to be set to the world in the matter of devotion to the teacher. That is why *Krishñā* studied as an ordinary pupil under an *āchāryā*. However, the Lord had his mission to accomplish, the work of his incarnation to be carried out. So the usual twelve years were not spent in education. Instead, with his divine power, he learned one *śāsthrā* a day and thus, in the course of sixty-four days, learned all the subjects. (The same was the case with Balarāmā. After all, was he not also a divine incarnation?) From this *Sāndīpani* realized that *Krishñā* was divine. After completing his *gurukulavāsā*, *Krishñā* asked his guru: 'What dakshina should I give you?' The *āchāryā* asked him to fetch his son who, many years earlier, had been swept away by the sea and had departed for Yama's abode. This was the dakshina that the guru desired of his disciple. But this is not relevant to our present subject.

Although *Sāndīpani* was aware of the divine character of *Krishṅā*, he also knew that the Lord had come in the guise of a pupil wanting to demonstrate to the world that the student (though an avatārā) must be made to work in the āśrama and must be made pure through his humility. So the sage did not make an exception in the case of *Krishṅā* in the matter of serving him.

Krishṅā was a darling among darling children. At the same time, he was the learned among the learned. But in obedience to his guru he fetched firewood from the forest. He recalls to his class-mate *Kuchēla* their gurukula days.

One day *Krishṅā* and *Kuchēla* went to the forest to fetch firewood. Darkness descended and it poured heavily. There was such a deluge that they were unable to make out the ups and downs of the wooded terrain. In the fearful darkness nothing could be seen. In his līlā the Lord pretended that he could not find his way back to the āśrama. He now asks *Kuchēla* recalling the incident. 'You and I were full of fear and sorrow and, holding one another's hand, we went round and round in the darkness. Do you remember that?' This incident illustrates how the guru was a taskmaster.

Now let us listen to the Lord himself about the other side of the guru, his love and affection for his pupils. 'Anxious that we had not returned to the *āśrama*, the guru searched for us and found us at daybreak. He was so moved that he said, 'Poor boys, you have suffered so much for my sake'. How heartily did he bless us to make up for the trouble we had taken. 'All the good things that you desire will be fulfilled,' he said. 'May the *Vēdhās* you have learned always protect you in their full glory and power.'

The guru not only personified a wealth of learning, he also represented a wealth of character, a wealth of discipline or *anushtānā* (religious practices) and a wealth of inner virtues (*Āthma*-smpath). It was the gurukula system of old that shaped him thus. When a guru was responsible for the students residing with him in his *āśrama*, it became incumbent upon both (teacher and taught) to remain unblemished in character. The system itself so moulded them as to achieve this purpose.

To deserve the affection and respect of students, the guru must be a man of character and live a disciplined life. He must possess the capacity to shed grace. Only with such a guru will the students like to live. On the intellectual plane too the teacher must be well advanced. He must take the trouble of acquiring more and more knowledge in his *śāsthrā* to enable him to answer students who, as mentioned by the Lord in the *Gītā*, keep questioning him (*paripraśna*).

Learning by Questioning

There is something remarkable about this method of learning in which *paripraśna* (questioning again and again) plays an important role. There are many instances in the Upanishads to demonstrate how students learn by frequent questioning of their teacher. In the *Gītā*, you find Arjuna often interrupting *Krishnā* to put questions to him. Questioning and cross-questioning are an indication that the student is attentive to the lesson taught.

If a professor has to prepare for a 'lecture' and reproduce what he has prepared before the class, there is no need for him to study his subject any further. He could deceive his class by pretending to know everything about it. When the student questions him in between (this is called '*paripraśna*') the professor will be compelled to have a thorough grasp of his subject. During *paripraśna* his ignorance, or gaps in knowledge, will be disclosed and he will be obliged to study his subject further in depth.

Paripraśna will encourage both teacher and student to try to go deeper into a subject. Just as the teacher puts questions to the student, the student should put questions to the teacher. In this way new and interesting insights will be gained. *J. Krishńamūrthi* holds question-and-answer sessions - and they are said to be interesting. We too conduct classes in *Bhāsyam* and *Vakyārthā* and we find them interesting when intelligent questions are asked. There is greater keenness to know all aspects of the subject taught or discussed.

Āchāryā himself has spoken about this matter. An absorbing aspect of his *Bhāshyas* is that, in his discussions, he himself anticipates the likely questions and cross-questions of the opponents of his system. In his answers he, so to speak, hits the nail on the head. He posits the opposition point of view as '*pūrvapaksa*' and establishes his own conclusion as '*siddhānthā*'. In his *Bhāshya* on the *Bruhadārańyaka* Upanishad- in the *upākarmā* (somewhat similar to an introduction) to the second chapter - he provides an example of the excellence of this method. He observes: 'By dealing with a subject in the form of the opponent's questions and the answers to them the student's mind is drawn to it. If, as in Tharka *śāsthrā* (logic), statements are made in a terse epigrammatic form it becomes difficult to understand subtle points or truths.'

There are some learned people who do not have the ability to present a subject in the form of a lecture. But if you keep asking them questions they keep answering them satisfactorily. In this manner the questioner could extract all the relevant information about the subject concerned.

There was a sthapati (master carpenter) called Malaikańdan *Sōmasundara* Āchāri. He could not read or write nor make speeches. But he knew everything about the building of chariots. He had made a name for himself by building chariots for some twenty or twenty-five temples. But he could not speak about his work. He came to the *āgama-Silpa* conference held in 1962 at

Ilayāththangudi. Sa Ganēsan, who was in charge of the arrangements, very much regretted the fact that the sthapati, though so knowledgeable about his art, could not speak about it before the sadas (conference of assembly). It was then that the idea of *pariprasna* occurred to me. I said to *Ganēsan*: 'You have a general idea of chariot-making. Based on your knowledge, keep questioning the sthapati on his work. He will be able to pass on all his knowledge on chariot-building.' As decided, *Ganēsan* kept putting very intelligent questions to the sthapati and the Āchāri kept giving excellent answers. Indeed, during this session the subject so developed as to suggest the shape of a chariot. People who were present talked about it as an extremely interesting and significant item of the sadas. The Āchāri was presented with a gold necklace and given the title of 'Emperor of Chariots'. (Ratha-Chakravarthin). I mention this to illustrate the value of *pariprasna.*

The Guru is Moulded by the Disciple

Two qualifications for a guru are mentioned in the Mundakōpanishad (1-002-12) in the passage dealing with the concept of the *Paramāthman* (*Paramāthma-taththva*): here one is exhorted to 'go to the guru for refuge'. One qualification is that he must be a srōthriya. A srōthriya is one who is steeped in the *Vēdhās*. Erudition in the *Vēdhās* constitutes his educational qualification.

But as a guru he must have a second qualification. That is he must be a Brahma-nishta: apart from possessing knowledge of the *Paramāthman* to the utmost limits, he must have realization of it in his heart. Such personal experience or realization is not possible without love, the spirit of sacrifice, the desire to help others and truthful conduct. It means that the Upanishadic *āchāryā*, was not merely a man of knowledge but a teacher who possessed a wealth of qualities which enabled him to lead his student to the realization of the Self. In English one speaks of 'qualities of head and heart'. Like that, the guru must be intellectually distinguished and must have a big heart. The student living with him in the gurukula helps the guru in realizing this. In other words, just as the disciple is moulded by the teacher, the teacher is also (indirectly) moulded by his disciple.

The Gurupītās

In all this talk I had in mind not only the guru who imparts *vidhyā* to his students but also those who have come in a line of succession like me with the title of guru and are seated on the *gurupītās*. These *gurupītās* were established for the well-being of the people and to take them on the right path across the jungle of samsārā (worldly life) and to lead them to *Īśwarā*. It is only when the disciples are virtuous, living in accordance with the discipline prescribed by the *śāsthrās* pertaining to them, that we too will earn their support and respect by following the far stricter injunctions of the *śāsthrā* that are meant for us and by observing the discipline and conduct of our calling (*āchārā* and *anushtānā*). Otherwise what will happen if the disciples, do not live according to the rules meant for them? The sanyāsi-guru who does no more than try to live according to the rules he has to observe evokes their admiration. A guru who is a yathi (an ascetic who has controlled his senses) must eat the simplest of food, live in the humblest of dwellings, and wear the simplest of clothes. Even for the slightest impurity he must bathe and fast. He must remain ever austere, observe the rules of *āchārā* without even a little deviation from them. Only then will he be true to himself as a sanyāsin and attain siddhi. Only then will he be a true guru and become capable of leading his disciples from this worldly life on to uniting them with the Supreme Being.

Those who work in an atomic energy plant have to observe a number of precautions to protect themselves from radiation.

Similarly, we too have to protect ourselves from the radiation of lapses in *āchārā* (conduct according to the *śāsthrās*) and remain ever alert. A man whose work is concerned with atomic reactors will hurt himself and cause damage to the reactor if he does not observe the rules of the establishment. The result is that those who are to benefit from the reactor will stand to lose. Action is taken against the man who does not strictly observe the rules governing work in an atomic plant. On the other hand, if he is strict in the observance of the rules, nobody holds a celebration to congratulate him.

Similarly, if we fail even a bit in observing our dharma as ascetics we must be questioned about it. But we don't deserve praise for our adherence to it. The anxiety is about whether we can truly practice the yathi-dharma (the duties of ascetics) fully. That being the case, if you shower praises on us exclaiming. 'O what a hard life of vows and observances you are leading! How you suffer for our sake! What great sacrifices are you making!' , in course of time we will become conceited because of such praise. And what will be the result? We might stop observing one by one such practices as we are now observing partly, or only fractionally. This will mean the end of the 'matam' (the gurupītā) and with it all the good that should accrue to the world from it will also come to an end.

The *āchāryā* who lives strictly according to the discipline expected of him will not receive any praise if his disciples are also careful in the observance of the vows, fasts and other rules of *āchārā* and *anushtānā* enjoined on them. In this way he will not become conceited nor will there be any risk of his becoming lax in his observances. This is my wish: 'May I have good disciples like the ones described above. If we, the gurus, are guilty of any lapse in the observance of our rules they must question us about it and correct us. They must ask us: 'Why, Swāmiji, is it proper for you to do like this?'

A Sanyāsin Who is on his own and a Pītā-Guru :

My statement that the quality of the disciples determines the quality of the guru applies to the *gurupītās* also. A sanyāsin who is on his own need to have knowledge only of the religious *sampradāyā* (religious tradition and code of conduct) to which he belongs. He must of course go beyond and become a jnanin or a devotee in order to resign himself to the will of the Lord. It is different with the sanyāsins who head the *gurupītās* or *Matālayā*s. They have to clear the doubts raised by their disciples on the *śāsthrās*. They have to hold conferences of the learned and find answers to intricate questions on religious practices and other subjects. So they must have a mastery of the *śāsthrās*.

When the disciples seek advice and enlightenment on the *śāsthrās*, the heads of the *Matās* will be enthusiastic about learning more to answer their questions. They will also be encouraged to hold meetings of learned people to inquire into the *śāsthrās* and arrive at decisions on matters of dispute. The disciples who seek advice must themselves possess knowledge of the *śāsthrās*. Those who do not possess any such knowledge will obviously have no doubts to be cleared. When they have doubts they go to their guru, the head of the *Matā*, to clear them. Disciples are becoming less and less acquainted with the *śāsthrās*. It is so among the Hindu community in general. The extent of the learning associated with *gurupītās* is commensurate with that possessed by the disciples of the gurus.

It is sad that since people are becoming less and less conversant with the *śāsthrās* the *gurupītās* are also descending to their level. Is there a greater danger to our religion than the fact that the *gurupītās*, whose duty it is to preserve the *śāsthrās* for the present and for the future, are themselves wanting in this respect? So you must learn the *śāsthrās* to the best of your ability not only for your own sake but also for the sake of elevating us to the desired level. That means you must realize that it is your responsibility to make the gurus occupying the *gurupītās* more determined in preserving the *śāsthrās*. In pursuit of this goal you must yourself acquire good knowledge of the *śāsthrās*.

What happens when this is not done? There is a saying: ' Where there is no sugar factory the flowers of the iluppa tree serve as sugar (means a poor substitute).' If I talk to you a bit about this or that subject, you praise me to the skies. An engineer must know engineering, a doctor must know therapeutics. Similarly, the head of the gurupītā must know the *śāsthrās*. If he does not know them it is bad. There is no need to laud a guru if he happens to know something about the *śāsthrās*.

Apart from matters relating to the *śāsthrās* of old, I happen to speak about things, connected with the new sciences, about history, epigraphy, linguistics etc. People learned in all these disciplines come to me. They actually come to speak to me about their personal problems. In between I just provoke them to speak on subjects in which they are experts so that I too may learn a little from them. It is in this way that I have got to know the A B C of a number of subjects and learned to lecture on them! Listening to me, you marvel at my performance and sing my praises, describing me as 'omniscient', as a 'treasure-house of all arts', and as 'one possessing insight into all knowledge.'

I mention this to impress on you that, when the disciples are learned, the guru, so as to keep pace with them, is compelled to rise to a higher level of *vidhyā*.

There is greater likelihood of good *āchāryā* and good disciples emerging if you have a system in which the gurukulās are small in scale with the *āchāryā* and disciples residing together in harmony.

Institutionalism : Ṡankarā's Work For A Necessary Evil :

It is when a guru is on his own as an individual, without the backing of an institution, that he has greater reason to remain pure of heart and mind. I make this statement in spite of the fact that I myself head an institution and have the title of '*āchāryā*'. Sri Ādhi *Ṡankara Bhagavadpādhā* was the very first to introduce an institution in our religion, an institution with a strong foundation. It was again he who brought together the followers of our religion thus on an institutional basis, thereby enabling it to flourish without losing even a bit of its vitality. I, who praise *Ṡankarāchāryā* for his work of institutionalization, at the same time support the system of individual *āchāryā* (teachers without the backing of an institution).

Praising Sri Ṡankarā (for what he accomplished) is justified. What would happen to the vast community of our people if there were only a few āsramās under individuals functioning on their own and a handful of disciples however virtuous they be?

All was well when the country was sparsely populated. People then followed the path prescribed by the *sāsthrās* and lived as humble citizens, looking upon the few who led a life of inward purity as their ideal. But, in course of time, the population increased, and it meant that the 'quantity' grew and the 'quality' declined. The result was a lowering of the standards of that section of people who were expected to be an ideal for others.

Taking advantage of this situation, other religions like Buddhism and Jainism created a rift in society. They realized that they could perform their work as an opposition and grow in strength only by organising themselves on an institutional basis. And they did precisely this and grew strong, winning the support of the rulers also.

During those times it became imperative to bring together people belonging to our religion as a united body. To accomplish this our *āchāryā* had to bring our people under an institutional order. This he did on a national scale to the astonishment of the whole world. No amount of praise would be adequate for this great work of his.

However, even this (uniting our people under an order) must be described as a necessary evil; a lesser evil with which it became necessary to repulse a bigger evil. When there is organisational backing it is possible that the *āchāryā* of a school or a *Matālayā* may not be always awake to the need to preserve the strength of his Self (*Āthma*-bala). The backing of the people, monetary strength and ownership of property are 'disincentives' as far as fostering an *āchāryā*'s *Āthma*-bala is concerned. That is why, in the beginning, the gurukulās were under individual *āchāryās*.

Big Educational Institutions of Old

Thakshaśila (Taxila, now in Pakistan) was famous long before the time of the Buddhists - in fact right from the Upanishadic period. The region in which it is situated was then called *Gāndhārā*. *Gāndhāri* was a princess of the *Gāndhārā* kingdom. It was in *Thakshaśila* that the great-grandson of the *Pāṅdavās*, *Jānamējaya* performed the *Sarpa Yāgā* (snake sacrifice). Before him, it was also there that the *Mahābhāratā* epic was first introduced to the sages. So much for its connection with the *Mahābhāratā*. *Thakshaśila's* connection with the *Ramāyāna* is much greater. The place owes its name to the fact that it was founded by Bharata's son *Thaksha*. It had its origin in *Vēdhic* times. When Fa-hien traveled in India in the fifth century A.D. and wrote about his travels, it abounded in Buddhist chaithyas and *vihārās*. Later the Hunas raided the city and razed it to the ground. When Hsuan Tsang visited it 200 years after Fa-hsien he found the place in ruins.

We learn that *Thakshaśila* was a great Buddhist centre of education. But it had no central university teaching a variety of subjects. Instead, it had a number of small schools located in the same place. Though not under a central set-up, sixteen subjects were taught including the *Vēdhās*. Great men like *Chānakya*, it is said, were taught here.

Nālandā, on the other hand, was an institution similar to the universities of present times. From its ruins we learn that it had large lecture halls and hostels. *Nālandā* is in Bihar, the Magadha of olden times. 'Bihar' is derived from '*vihārā*', 'vihar', *Rājagruha* (Rajgir) which was associated with the Buddha's life is near *Pātaliputrā* (Patna) and close by is *Nālandā*. One of the important Buddhist philosophers, *Nāgārjuna*, chose this place for the university (*viśva-vidhyālayā, sarva-kalāśālā*. We learn that *Nālandā* university was at its zenith in the fifth century A.D. during the reign of Narasimha *Bālādityā*. Apart from Buddhist *śāsthrās*, other subjects were also taught like the *Vēdhās* to some extent and, to a larger extent, mathematics, astronomy, Tharka, music, medicine, etc. There were 10,000 residential students here. We feel proud that many good students came from Europe and other parts of Asia to learn here.

It seems that engineering and other technical subjects of the time which were taught in *Thakshaśila* were not taught at *Nālandā*. Though all students were admitted the purpose of *Nālandā* university was in particular the creation of Buddhist bhikshus (monks). So, probably, 'worldly' technical subjects of practical use were not included in the curriculum. But astronomy was taught and there was an excellent observatory in *Nālandā* with instruments to scan the skies. There was also a library housed in a building with nine floors.

Mahmud of Ghazni, Mohammad Ghori and others invaded India and made havoc of our cultural heritage. The Slave dynasty began its rule in the 13th century. *Nālandā* university went into decline from that time and eventually to ruins. But it is matter of pride for India that such a university flourished for as long as eight centuries.

Three centuries after *Nālandā* university had reached its zenith (in the 5th century), the *Vikramasilā* university was established on a hill on the banks of the *Gangā* in Bengal by *Dharmapālā* of the Pala dynasty. *Dharmapālā* also built a Buddhist *Matālayā* attached to it. Many bhikshus from Tibet came to learn here. A large number of monks also went from here to spread Buddhism in Tibet. Many Buddhist texts (especially Tantrik) became unavailable in India in later times and had to be obtained from Tibet. Even now many old books have been discovered in the Tibetan monasteries. Their presence in Tibet could be traced to the time of contacts between Tibet and India when *Nālandā* and *Vikramasilā* universities flourished.

In ancient times there were a number of centres which taught the Hindu *sāsthrās*, arts and sciences. *Kāsi* in the North and *Kānchi* in the South were two of the most important of these. In the land of Gandhiji's birth, Kathiawar, Valabhi was an excellent educational centre. Another great centre was *Vikramādityā's* Ujjayini in central India. I have mentioned, north, south and west. *Navadvīpā*, associated with the Hindu religion, was a centre of learning and it was situated in the east, in Bengal. It has come to be called Nadia. In earlier times all Hindu *dharsanās* (systems of philosophy) were taught here. Later, just as *Nālandā* and *Vikramasilā* were destroyed by the Muslim onslaught, *Navadvīpā* too fell under evil days. But in the 15th century it re-emerged from its ruins. Earlier, it had been a seat of learning where many subjects were taught, but now it was famous particularly for *Tharka-sāsthrā (logic)*.

But in all these places, where *Vēdhic* studies formed part of the curriculum, there were individual gurukulās which functioned in groups but which were not under any university.

This does not mean that there were no Hindu educational institutions at all under one central body like a university. Even before the advent of Buddhism and Jainism there were big gurukulās here and there. Generation after generation, new commentaries must have appeared, works based on new inquiries, on the fourteen different *vidhyā*-s (branches of learning) based on the *Vēdhās*. Poetry and drama also must have continued to flourish. As a result of contacts gained with other countries from the time of Alexander's invasion, we must have become acquainted with new sciences, new subjects. All these must havc taken strides over the decades and the cencturies.

Apart from the Buddhist and *Jainā* centres of education, there must have existed institutions belonging to the *Vēdhic* tradition also that were similar to the universities of today with many students studying at the same centre. It must have been so especially after it became difficult to conduct classes with one teacher, or with one teacher with a couple of assistants. When the subjects themselves gained in dimension, it became difficult for the student to study them in all their aspects. To some extent even in earlier times all students must have been taught only the basics of a subject and parts of it in detail as an 'optional'. When a thousand students came to study under Patanjali Maharishi in Chidambaram, each wanting to learn a different lesson, he had a curtain erected between him and the students. Sitting behind the curtain and taking the form of *Sēshā* (one of his earlier births) with his one thousand mouths, he taught the students, speaking to them with each one of his tongues. So goes the story.

The New Religions and Big Educational Institutions

The rise of Buddhism and Jainism, with the vigorous propagation of their doctrines, led to more contacts with other countries and the development of various arts and sciences. This necessitated big educational institutions. Earlier the system had consisted of gurukulās under individual gurus with a few students.

There was another important reason for big educational institutions to come into being with the advent of the new religions. Perhaps those who induced Hindus to join these new faiths genuinely wanted knowledge to spread among the people. But we know from our recent history that, when it comes to religious conversion, there can be another hidden motive. What have we seen in recent times? Religion has been 'nicely' propagated and conversions made through the establishment of schools everywhere and through scholarships. We have had so much experience of all this. It occurs to me that when non-*Vēdhic* religions made their appearance in this country they must have established educational institutions to attract people. It must also be said that there were certain unique or peculiar circumstances which obtained among us and which helped to draw the common people to those new faiths in this manner.

Peculiar Circumstances

What were these circumstances? Our forefathers had laid down that Brahmins must give instruction to members of all castes in their respective occupations. Besides, Brahmins also gave them instruction in dharma and imparted knowledge concerning the Self. However, the *Vēdhās* were not taught directly to people belonging to the fourth varṅa. According to our varṅa-dharma, different occupations were allotted to different communities. In this system *Vēdhic* education and the practices arising from the *Vēdhās* were the lifelong occupation exclusively of the Brahmins.

Vēdhic instruction was given to *Kshathriyās* and *Vaisyās* only up to a point and it was not given to the fourth varṅa at all. Though the *Vēdhās* were not directly taught to the fourth varṅa, they and others were taught the truths contained in them, the meaning of *Vēdhic* coucepts, the *Purāṅās* and Epics and ethics.

However, this teaching for spiritual development did not, in the case of the common people, take the form of classroom instruction, involving gurus and, disciples. In the gurukulās the teaching meant mainly instruction in the *Vēdhās*. After their work of teaching the *Vēdhās*, etc., the *āchāryā* taught people belonging to other castes. The common folk learned about spiritual and moral matters from those conversant with the *Purāṅās*, the epics and works on personal and social conduct rather than from the *āchāryā* of the gurukulās.

People belonging to the fourth varṅa, who were already doing their work efficiently, had no need to leave their homes and go to some remote gurukula to learn their occupation. Nor did they need to send their children to the gurukula since the home itself was their school.

The Smruthis declare that the *Vēdhās* alone need to be learned from Brahmins, that the rest of the subjects, and the various crafts and trades could be learned from others. Such an arrangement was permitted from a practical point of view. Children belonging to the labour class did not spend some years first in learning their job and then applying it in earning their livelihood. They learned as they worked, assisting their elders at home. Only when some fine aspect of work had to be learned, some doubt to be cleared or some subtle skill acquired did they go to the Brahmins for help. Since, however, there were people conversant with the minute details or finer points of a craft or trade among members of the community concerned also there was not always the need to go to the Brahmin to learn them.

Goldsmiths, sculptors, carpenters and other artisans are called Āchāris in Tamil. This shows that among the communities engaged in such occupations there were experts to teach their children.

We must note here that, although the three varṅas (Brahmins, *Kshathriyās* and *Vaiśyās*) had the right in olden times to learn the *Vēdhās* and become students in gurukulās, the *upanayanā* of the children belonging to these castes was performed at different ages. The practice of *aksharābhyāsa* (learning the alphabet) before the *upanayanā* must have originated in later times. *Aksharābhyāsa* is not included in the 40 *samskāras* (rites). In the earliest school there was no writing or any such thing as written matter. As I have said before, instruction was entirely oral - it was by listening that one learned. *Upanayanā* was then the commencement of education. During the *upanayanā* ceremony the *upadēśa* (initiation) was given through the great Gāyathrī manthra and this *upadēśa* was the seed sown for learning the *Vēdhās* by listening. After the *upanayanā* the child was sent to the gurukula.

The Brahmin child was sent to his guru after his *upanayanā* performed at the age of eight. The initiation of the Kshathriya child was at eleven and of the *Vaiśyā* child at twelve. They were similarly sent to the guru at these respective ages. The Brahmin child's *upanayanā* must be performed before he is 16 years of age. Similarly the upper limit for the Kshathriya is 22 and for the *Vaiśyā* 24. If the Brahmin child happens to be very bright his *upanayanā* may be performed at five, the corresponding ages for bright Kshathriya and *Vaiśyā* children being six and eight.

Why did the education of *Kshathriyās* and *Vaiśyās* commence later than that of Brahmins? Any child develops a flair for work according to its natural environment. It has the instinct to imitate. The non-Brahmin castes did a great deal of manual trades. Children of these people, for each of whom a particular trade was a swadharma (own duty), could not learn by observation any trade or craft actually being practiced in a gurukula. The gurukula was not a workshop.

Nowadays, there are educationists like Montessori who declare that it is not right to learn lessons in the abstract, in an empty manner. According to them learning must be by actual doing. When a child does not learn by 'doing' he will not be moulded properly and those brought up in such a system will not also do their job properly. The Montessori system is nothing new to us. Our forefathers practiced something similar to it. That is why all children, except those of Brahmins, whose lifetime occupation was expanding the horizons of knowledge were not put in a gurukula when they were very young. Such children, living happily with their parents and grandparents, could make use of their instinct of imitation to learn their occupations (by 'doing'). Besides, the parents received their children's help and made extra profit.

There is another aspect to be noted. Brahmin children who had to cultivate *manthrās* that are invested with sacred power had many restrictions with regard to food and other habits unlike other children. How could children of other castes obtain food to which they wee used from gurukulās run by Brahmins? Such children joined the gurukula at an age when they could control their palate. This was the reason why their *upanayanā* was performed when they were older than Brahmin children.

If non-Brahmin children were to learn their trade or occupation they could do so at home to a considerable extent. Kshathriya and *Vaiśyā* children were to join the gurukula only to study the *Vēdhās*. There was no need for them to attain the same proficiency in this subject as Brahmin children. Otherwise it would tell upon their own occupation, their swadharma. It was so enough for them to gain a limited degree of *Vēdhic* knowledge and for that purpose they did not have to spend as many years in learning as the Brahmin children.

Different Syllabuses

Education and such matters came, in course of time, to be centred around Brahmin society. Kshathriya princes and other important members of royalty also spent a considerable number of years in the gurukula.

But importance must have been given to the *chathurdaśa-vidhyā*-s (fourteen branches of learning) in the syllabus of Brahmins and subjects like the science or art of warfare, *Artha Śāsthrā* (political economy and statecraft), etc., were taught only on an elementary level. Since Brahmins had to be qualified to teach the occupations of other castes the *gurukulavāsā* of some Brahmin students extended up to more than twelve years. During this period they were taught *Dhanur Vēdhā*, political economy, sculpture or music. But this did not apply to all Brahmins,

Kshathriya children had to study *Artha Śāsthrā, Dhanur Vēdhā* (art of warfare and statecraft) thoroughly. So the syllabus and curriculum for them must have been different from those of the Brahmin children. There might possibly have existed gurukulās exclusively for Kshathriya children. Or it might be that in gurukulās, where he fourteen branches of learning of Brahmins were taught, the Kshathriya children also learned them up to a point or in between other lessons. Later, it is likely, they went to exclusive gurukulās to learn more thoroughly statecraft, the art of warefare, etc. Like the inter-collegiate classes prevalent now, students of different gurukulās might have jointly studied some subjects. *Bharadvājā* taught not only his son *Dhrōṅā* bu the Kshathriya Dhrupadha. Similarly, the Kshathriya *Krishṅā* and the Brahmin *Kuchēla* (*Sudhāmā*) studied together.

Two Different Stories

But there is a difference here. *Bharadvājā* was unsurpassed in *Dhanur Vēdhā*. His son *Dhrōṅā* learned the art thoroughly from him and from *Parasūrāmā*. Later he gave training in it to the *Pāndavā* and Kaurava princes. The Brahmin *Kuchēla* would not have studied in this manner. Between the stories of *Dhrōnā* and *Kuchēla* there is another difference but I am straying far from my subject. I will tell the stories in brief since they are well known being from *Mahābhāratā* and the *Bhāgavatha*.

Dhrōnā, after his years as a student, suffered a spell of poverty. He went to Dhrupadha for help in the belief that, as his old classmate, he had a right to ask for such help. Intoxicated as he was with power Dhrupadha was cold to him thinking that it was beneath his dignity to receive him. 'This wretched Brahmin, he wants to flaunt his friendship before me?' So he said to himself, full of contempt for the visitor. Years later, wanting to take revenge on his old friend, *Dhrōnā* made Arjuna take Dhrupadha prisoner. Reluctantly, Dhrupadha gave away half his kingdom to *Dhrōnā*. But the humiliation rankled in Dhrupadha's breast and he performed a sacrifice with the sole purpose of begetting a son who would slay *Dhrōnā*. From the sacrificial fire arose Dhrishtadyumna and Dhraupadhi.

Later, when Arjuna won the hand of Dhraupadhi in the svayamvara contest, Dhrupadha gladly gifted away his daughter in marriage to the *Pāndavā* prince, not minding the fact that the young man had earlier taken him captive. During his confrontation with the *Pāndavās* he had formed a high opinion of him for his valour. So his anger was directed against *Dhrōnā* who had incited. Arjuna against him. Eventually, in the *Mahābhāratā* war, Arjuna had to face his guru *Dhrōnā* in battle. It was not an easy confrontation for the *Pāndavā*, for *Dhrōnā* was an unrivalled warrior.

You know the story of how Arjuna left the responsibility for his victory in the hands of *Krishnā* and how the truthful Dharmaputhra (Yudhisthira) was persuaded to say: 'Asvattha*ma* *hatah kunjarah'* (Aśvatthama, the elephant, has been killed). As Yudhisthira said these words *Krishṅā* blew his conch-shell *Pānchajanya* and the last word 'kunjarah' (elephant) was drowned in the sound and *Dhrōṅā* did not hear it. Broken-hearted, he cast away his weapons and drew back from the combat faltering. At that opportune moment Dhrishtadyumna plunged forward and killed him. The *Mahābhāratā* adds that all those who watched the scene in the *Pāṅdavā* army felt outraged by the ignoble deed.

The other story is contrary to this in spirit and is such as to gladden our hearts. Like *Dhrōṅā*, *Kuchēla* too suffered the pangs of poverty and went to *Krishṅā*, his classmate, for help. *Bhagawān* was not indifferent to him and received him with royal honours and, with all his love, gave him a seat by his side, worshipped at his feet and asked Rukmini to fan him with the whisk. *Krishṅā*'s *māyā* was such that *Kuchēla* returned home without speaking a word about his poverty. But before *Kuchēla* was back home *Bhagawān* created a rain of gold for the poor Brahmin who could now hardly recognize his house and was lost in wonder.

The story of *Kuchēla* makes us happy while that of *Dhrōṅā* with its account of ill-will and injustice creates misgivings in our mind. Here I will say what I think of the two Brahmins, *Kuchēla*, however poor he was and however much he suffered, lived humbly and virtuously with the determination that he must not forsake the dharma of a Brahmin. That brought him great honour. *Dhrōṅā* was also a great man. But, as a Brahmin, he did not stop with teaching *Dhanur Vēdhā*, but himself took up arms nad engaged himself in combat. That is why his story did not take the happy turn that *Kuchēla*'s did. It is true that he did not confront Dhrupadha directly and did no more than incite Arjuna against him. Even so it was not proper for him as a Brahmin to feel affronted in the manner of a Kshathriya and feel the urge for revenge, though it might be conceded that Dhrupadha gave him cause for anger. From the very beginning he took an interest in the art of warfare to an extent more than proper for a Brahmin and he received training in it from his father as well as from *Parasūrāmā*. In this manner, little by little, damage was done to his swadharma (his own duties by birth).

That by such conduct *Dhrōñā* brought difficulties upon himself and others was shown by later events in his life. It came to pass that he had to fight on the side of the unjust Duryodhana. How painful it must have been for him. Sharper than the arrows of Arjuna were the words hurled at him by *Bhīmasēna* in the battlefield *Bhīmā* accused him of acting against the Brahmin dharma. *Dhrōñā* could say nothing in answer and had to swallow the insult.

A Brahmin deserves esteem and respect only as long as he remains a Brahmin. If he slips in his Brahmin dharma he incurs the disrespect of others. These truths are revealed in a striking manner in the stories of *Kuchēla* and *Dhrōñā*.

Brahmins during the Buddha's time

It is likely that many Brahmins during the Buddha's time did not live according to their dharma. (I had thought that the stories of *Dhrōñā* and *Kuchēla* were not relevant to our subject but eventually they do appear to fit in). The Buddha strove hard to find a way to the cessation of sorrow or duhkha. He sought in vain an answer from the Brahmin scholars of his time. Subsequently, he practiced austerities and found that desire was the root cause of all sorrow. And the cause of desire was *Māyā* (illusion). *Māyā* it is that makes you believe that this world is real. *Mōkshā* or *Nirvāñā* (deliverance) is that which dispels *Māyā*. In *Nirvāñā* there is nothingness. When there is nothing there is no *Māyā* also, no desire, no sorrow. We learn from the story of the Buddha that he discovered these truths and proclaimed them to the world.

However, the truths that are said to have been discovered by him had been proclaimed earlier by the *Vēdhās* and the Upanishads and by *śāsthrās* like the *Gītā*. The Buddha himself could not say anything final about the nature of *Nirvāṇā* and he left it to be understood as a state of arid sunya or vacuity. But our *śāsthrās* have covered ground beyond and made it clear that *mōkshā* is not sunya but the state of fullness, the state of supreme bliss of the true consciousness (*paripūrṇa-sachchidānandā*). If no Brahmin had come forward at the time to demonstrate this truth to the Buddha should we not take it as a sign of their degeneration?

Kshathriyās and Brahmins

The Brahmin *Dhrōṇā* was opposed by the Kshathriya Dhrupadha. The Buddha and the *Jīnā*, who were opposed to the *Vēdhās* studied by the Brahmins and to the yajnas and other religious duties performed by them, were also both *Kshathriyās*. Centuries later, that is 500 years before our time, another man appeared who too like the Buddha and the *Jīnā*, opposed the authority of the *Vēdhās* and also the *Varṇāśrama* dharma. However, without severing himself completely from Hindu dharma, he accepted the nama-japa of Hindus, the meditation of the Sabda, the Brahman, etc., and established the Sikh religion. He too was a Kshathriya.

Dhrupadha and *Kārtavīryā* were examples of those who harboured ill-will against Brahmins as individuals. The first, as we have already noticed, was a foe of *Dhrōṇā* and the second of Jamadagni Maharishi. Both were *Kshathriyās* but they were neither opposed to Brahmin ideas and concepts nor did they want to establish new religions.

In the case of Dhrupadha what began as contempt turned into hatred. And in the case of *Kārtavīryā* it was jealousy for Jamadagni first that developed into hatred. *Kārtavīryā* thought about Jamadagni thus : 'This Brahmin Jamadagni, wearing just a piece of cloth to protect his modesty, lives in a hut, but with the power of his austerities he has won that which, I can't obtain with the prowess of my arm. He has obtained the sacred cow Surabhi from the gods, the cow what yields all his desires. No wonder his wife is so lavish in her hospitality to me and to my whole entourage'. Jealousy so incited turned into hatred and he killed the maharishi in the end.

Then you must have heard of the rivalry between the Brahmin *Vaśistha* and the Kshathriya *Viśwāmitra*, of how the latter was determined in earning the title of 'Brahmarishi' from no less a sage than his very rival *Vaśistha*. In our *Purāñās* and *śāsthrās* we have a few instances of the conflict between Brahmins, remarkable for their power of austerities, and *Kshathriyās* renowned for their physical prowess.

If we further inquire into this subject of Brahmin-Kshathriya conflict, the false propaganda mounted nowadays against *Varñāśrama*-dharma will be exposed. Present-day reformers argue that Turks, whites and other invaders could bring the Indian subcontinent under their heel because our society was riven and weakened by caste differences. The implication of this charge is that Brahmins managed to keep the rajas under their control and suppressed the rest of the people. As a consequence, it is said, the embittered castes, who formed the majority, became indifferent to the fortunes of the nation ('What does it matter whether it is Rama who rules the country or Ravana?) So much so, the argument goes, when foreigners invaded the land, these 'embittered castes' did not cooperate in the country's defence or they even helped the invaders. This view, whose purpose is to tar the Brahmins as the culprits responsible for the subjugation of the nation by foreigners, in fact implies that these other castes were themselves guilty. They betrayed the nation (according to this view) on the pretext that they had not been given an elevated status. As a matter of fact there is no historical evidence to show that they harboured any ill-will against Brahmins and *Kshathriyās*. Notwithstanding this, the histories written by Europeans make the above charge. And our own people, who are influenced by such prejudiced accounts, repeat the charge again and again; the charge that it was because of the differences created by varña-dharma and the lack of unity among Hindus supposedly resulting from it that we again and again came under the thrall of foreigners.

If foreign powers succeeded in establishing their rule among us it is because there was no unity among the rajas, not because of differences arising out of varña-dharma. If at all there was at some time or other any confrontation between the castes, it was, as mentioned above, between Brahmins and *Kshathriyās*.

National Unity Fostered by Vēdha Dharma

The true state of affairs was contrary to what is contained in this accusation. However much history is twisted, a study of the sequence of events is bound to reveal the truth. What is suggested in the history written by Europeans themselves? Contraty to what is erroneously believed at present, there was firm unity in the nation only during times when the *Varñāśrama*-dharma based on the *Vēdhās* was strictly practiced. Great empires ruled by great imperial dynasties flourished during such periods. And the country was seldom subjected to foreign invasions then. It was when kingdoms supporting non-*Vēdhic* religions that propagated *Ahimsā* were ruling that the unity of the nation was undermined resulting in the fracturing of the country into a number of states. The way was paved thus for its becoming an easy prey to foreign invaders.

Such facts are subtly indicated in the histories written by foreigners. Now, after our becoming free, these are openly and emphatically being proclaimed by distinguished historians like K.M. Munshi who are engaged in rewriting our history without any bias.

Munshi is not an old-fashioned Sanatanist like me. He is a reformist, and a friend of Gandhiji's And he was a member of the Nehru cabinet. So he cannot be included among the 'reactionaries' who insist on *jāthi dharma* (or caste). But in the interest of truth he and people of his thinking have made the above observation about the nation's unity.

The Mauryan empire was prosperous during the reign of Chandraguptha who maintained the order of *Vēdhic āchārā* and *Varṅāśrama*. After *Aśōkā*, who supported, Buddhism, the Mauryan empire broke up and fell a prey to the Scythians (Sakas), Parthians (from Asia Minor which was under Greek rulers), the Kusanas and others. Later Pushyamitra Sunga came to power as emperor, supported the *Vēdhic* tradition and performed the asvamedha sacrifice. The nation became reinvigorated as if with an infusion of new blood. The empires of subsequent rulers like Samudragupta, Chandraguptha *Vikramādityā* of the Gupta dynasty (not to be confused with Chandraguptha Maurya mentioned earlier) who performed the asvamedha sacrifice flourished under the system of *Varṅāśrama*. Munshi and other historians like him point out that it was varṅa-dharma chiefly that inspired social unity and social strength during the period of the imperial Hindu dynasties.

The various castes lived zestfully and took pride in their allotted occupations being assured that they were well knit and well protected. The entire working class (engaged in various trades and crafts) were linked together like a chain, well integrated with each section complementing the other and contributing together to the unity of the country. The historians mentioned above point out that, unlike the Buddhist and *Jainā* doctrine of *Nirvāṅā* or kaivalya which did not appeal to the minds of people, there was something real and positive about the Hindu religion with its *Varṅāśrama*-dharma. It had *avatārās* descended to earth - like Rama and

Krishṅā - who had all the auspicious attributes and who, like all of us humans, married and begot children. They ruled over kingdoms and, instead of subscribing to *Ahimsā* and tolerating outrages against society, waged war successfully against the forces of evil and wickedness. Thus the creative urges of the Hindu religion led to the formation of great empires.

I have seen an extract from the writings of Munshi in which he shows that it is not altogether true that, Harshavardhana, the Buddhist, built a great empire. This belief gained ground from the popular work, Harshacharita, in which the author *Bāṅā*, who was patronized by Harsha, has given an exaggerated picture of the greatness of his king and his kingdom. The Gupta empire before Harsha was much bigger than it and unlike Harsha's lasted long with the support of Hindu dharma. Harsha's empire did not survive him.

Most of the Buddhist rulers also realized that, without the binding force of the *Varṅāśrama* system, society would become loosened and disintegrated that if they adhered to *Ahimsā* the country would be weakened and become an easy target for greedy foreign powers. So they supported *Ahimsā* only nominally and, though they built chaithyas and *vihārās*, they too fought wars. They also supported people carrying on their trades according to the varṅa-dharma. Even when their kingdom weakened, they too honoured worthy Brahmins of their time.

The fact of history belie the accusation that, as a result of the constraints of the varṅa-dharma of Brahmins, the nation was weakened and became an easy target for foreign invaders. After *Aśōkā*, when the Mauryan empire had its downfall, it was a Brahmin who got together the people and established the *Sātavāhana* empire in the Deccan.

My purpose in speaking about our history is to impress upon you the fact that people who have lived as one family should not be divided by the seeds of poison sown in the minds of any one section of them.

Adhvaitha and The State

Let me also expose another lie similar to the one about varṅa-dharma. Some critics say, 'Because of regarding the world as nothing but *Māyā* (illusion) as taught by *Śankarāchāryā*, Hindus lost their spirit of adventure and enterprise and became a soft people. That is how India was enslaved by foreign powers.' The *āchāryā* never expounded Adhvaitha and *Māyā* as doctrines to be followed in practice by all people. He brought them to the path of *karmānushtānā* (performance of religious duties) and worship based on devotion. He exhorted only people who had the maturity of mind to take to the path of Adhvaitha with its concept of *Māyā*.

To prove this it is sufficient here to cite what is historically known to be a fact. The source of inspiration for the founding of three powerful empires were Brahmins who were uncompromising Adhvaithins.

Malik Kafur, in the course of his devastating expedition through the South down to *Ramēśwaram*, razed many a temple to the ground and inflicted a deep wound on Hindu society. But our culture and civilisation came to the fore and attained the pinnacle of glory again. The credit for this should go to the Vijayanagara emperors. Who was it that helped to found their empire? The answer is *Vidhyārañya* Swāmin, the celebrated Adhvaitha exponent, scholar and statesman.

The kingdom of *Thanjāvūr* ruled by the *Nāyaks* was at first a branch of the Vijayanagara empire. The man who was responsible for its founding was *Gōvinda Dīkshita*. He was a gruhastha (householder) but was called '*Adhvaithāchāryā*'. *Śivāji* established the Maratha empire and saved Hindu society from the onslaught of Aurangzeb and his religious bigotry. His source of inspiration was an Adhvaithin and *brahmachārin* called *Samartha Rāmadas*.

I am talking about all three things because some people pretend to be very knowledgeable but speak without a sense of responsibility on subjects like caste, the unity of India, Adhvaitha, etc. Their views are calculated to create a sense of inferiority in us with regard to our great religious and cultural traditions.

Restraint Even in Conflict

Even with regard to conflict between Brahmins and *Kshathriyās* - which were infrequent - there were some features which testify to the greatness of our national culture and these need to be noted. In other countries if there were differences of opinion, say, between the Pope and a king or between the ulema and a sultan, they ended in a real quarrel or fight that sometimes took a bloody turn. Here it was different. Our kings did not try to put down Brahmins with their brute strength. If, as is erroneously claimed, the Brahmins lorded it over all the rest, breathing down their necks, during times of conflict between them and the *Kshathriyās* the common people would have instigated the *Kshathriyās* to do away with the Brahmins. But this never happened.

When there was an encounter between Brahmins and *Kshathriyās*, the community that wielded the sword acted with restraint and within certain bounds. It speaks for the virtuous character of the common people who, though not entitled to study the *Vēdhās*, never used any opportunity that might have arisen to incite a quarrel between these communities.

Opposition Based On Knowledge

The matter is not to be left at that. If Brahmins were really conceited about their intellectual attainments and superiority of caste, how would they have been placed on a high pedestal by people of virtue belonging to other castes? Does not justice demand that a community that is overbearing and arrogant should be kept under control? Indeed, a community that is not remarkable for its physical strength could easily have been put down. But we know from history that no steps were taken at any time against Brahmins on the pretext that they were overbearing. This shows that, apart from being intellectually distinguished. Brahmins were also men of character who deserved respect.

It was because they were learned that Brahmins were intellectually distinguished. But, apart from intellectual brilliance, it was the system of education then prevailing, especially *gurukulavāsā* that so moulded their character and conduct as to earn the respect of others.

Conflict with Brahmins, whenever it occurred on any significant scale, had nothing to do with the power gained through material possessions. It arose from opposition to the *Vēdhic* religion or differences with it. It was doctrinal, that is based on the *siddhānthā* or system of thought of another religion in relation to the *Vēdhic* dharma. And such opposition was proof of the intellectual strength of Brahmins in that they had to be confronted on the conceptual level. I make this remark in relation to the advent of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikkism.

Sikkhism was not as much opposed to the *Vēdhic* relition as Buddhism and Jainism had been. Though it rejected varňa-dharma and ritual, the elements that form the backbone of the *Vēdhic* religion, it did not proclaim itself as opposed to its mother religion, i.e. Hinduism. There were Sikh gurus who gave asylum to Brahmin pandits who had suffered at the hands of foreign Muslim rulers. Indeed, they even fought these foreign rulers.

The Buddha, the *Jīnā* and Nanak, who were all *Kshathriyās*, opposed Brahmins in a *sāthvik* manner (not through brute strength). Their confrontation was based on religious and philosophical ideas, a field in which the Brahmins excelled.

Those were times when Brahmins somewhat lagged behind in *Āthma*-bala, in inward force. But the proponents of the new religions recognized that the true strength of Brahmins lay in their traditional *śāsthrās*. To achieve victory over them and establish the superiority of their philosophy, they had to encounter Brahmins on the plane of ideas and not through any physical encounter. According to psychologists, like individual consciousness, there is 'racial' as well as 'class' consciousness. They also speak of powerful individuals arising as leaders of groups from time to time. A section of *Kshathriyās*, if not all, wished to do better than Brahmins in philosophy. The Buddha and the *Jīnā* emerged as representatives of this group. This (the fact that the rivalry between Brahmins and *Kshathriyās* was centred on religious doctrines and philosophical concepts) should be a matter of pride for both communities.

Brahmins need not be the exclusive repositories of knowledge, philosophy, etc. *Kshathriyās* ruled in accordance with the advice given by Brahmins learned in the *śāsthrās*. A section of this ruling class must have been conscious that, apart from their physical valour, they also possessed intellectual distinction. And this must have acted as a motive in the founding of new religions.

This psychological factor is revealed in another aspect also. Are not Brahmins recognized in the *śāsthrās* as *sāthvikas*? In real life too they remained more virtuous and peace-loving than others. The *Kshathriyās*, on the other hand, were doughty and warlike and thus *rājasa*. So, to look at the matter psychologically, they must have wanted to show themselves to be more *sāthvik* than Brahmins (in addition to wanting to excel them intellectually and to show themselves to be more deeply concerned about philosophical matters). This desire led to the founding of new religions. It was perhaps for this reason that (to show themselves to be more *sāthvik* than Brahmins) that they taught *Ahimsā* in an extreme form and opposed the yajnas in which animals were sacrificed. This does not mean that their sincerity in advocating *Ahimsā* is doubted. All that is meant is that their concept of non-injury probably arose out of their feeling that they must excel Brahmins in *sāthvik* qualities.

The Big Schools Of The New Religions

The Brahmin doctrine of the authority of the *Vēdhās*, of *Vēdhic* dharma and varña had no place in the new religions founded by the Buddha and the *Jīnā*. There are rules as to who can study the *Vēdhās* and who cannot. But the study of the basic texts of the new religions was thrown open to all. So, naturallyl (unlike the old *Vēdhic* gurukulās which were small), they had to establish big schools for all their followers.

Admitting all without any distinction to the new schools led to another development in education. The *śāsthrās* were taught in the gurukulās only in Sanskrit with all its grammatical refinements. The common people did not know Sanskrit; they knew only one or another of the *Prākruths*. One of the basic Buddhist texts, the Tripitaka (it is in three parts), is in the *Prākruth* called Pāli. The Angas, the authoritative texts of the *Jainās*, are composed in another *Prākruth*, Arddhamagadhi.

An important method of carrying out religious conversion among unlettered people without the use of force is by establishing schools, spreading education among them and teaching them religious texts. We know, in this context, the work of Christian missions. Five hundred years ago, when Nanak wanted to propagate his religion of Sikhism he realized that Punjabi had no script. The Guru who came after him, that is Guru Angad to invented a script. He collected Guru Nanak's teacings and propagated them. The script is called Gurumukhi since it orginated from the Guru. The point to note is that those who want to convert people to their faith in a *sāthvik* and clever manner without using force do so by establishing schools. Discarding the language of the learned, Sanskrit, the Buddhists and the *Jainās* had recourse to the language understood by the common people.

Subsequently, however, when the Buddhist and *Jainā* systems of thought developed the need arose for the expression of subtle and abstruse ideas. The Buddhists and the *Jainās* also then accepted Sanskrit as the most suitable vehicle for the purpose. Hsuan Tsang, who came to India during the reign of Harshavardhana (7th century A.D.), says that the Buddhists held their discussions in Sanskrit. However that be, schools bigger than before began to appear when the need was felt to teach the common people through the medium of their own tongue.

Gurukulās for Brahmins

I have already spoken about the system prevalent before the Buddhist and *Jainā* periods. *Vaiśyās* and *Sūdrās* went to Brahmin *āchāryā*s to be taught only about highly specialized subjects. The gurukulās were otherwise meant mainly for Brahmins and *Kshathriyās*. Indeed it would be more correct to say that they were meant mostly for Brahmin children. In those days gurukulās, education, etc., were associated mainly with Brahmins. Among *Kshathriyās*, the princes, other important members of the royal family, children of the chief officials, etc., lived in the gurukulās. It seems other children belonging to that caste - that is children of ordinary soldiers, of aides and others - were taught at home by the father or in special schools where training was given in arms. Even such Kshathriya children as those who lived in the gurukulās may not have received their education along with Brahmin children.

Now to recapitulate briefly what I have said about education and the varna system. There was no need for Kshthriyas to learn the *Vēdhās* in their entirety and also the fourteen *vidhyā*-s. Similarly, Brahmin boys would not have made a detailed study of the art of warfare (*Dhanur Vēdhā*) except those who were to train *Kshathriyās*. Others might not have studied subjects not needed for their livelihood like statecraft and Dhanu *Vēdhā*. So Brahmins and *Kshathriyās* must have had different syllabuses. However, it is certain that children of the two castes must have learned, at intervals, the *chathurdaśa - vidhyā*-s together in the same gurukula.

Since *Vaiśyās* have the right to learn the *Vēdhās* it is likely that their children also studied in Brahmin gurukulās. However, in course of time, as the population grew, new goods had to be manufactured and sold, and more contacts made with the outside world. *Vaiśyās* had, for the last-mentioned reason, to go to, and settle in, foreign countries. That being the case, they must have in due course put aside the study of the *Vēdhās* and specialized in the subjects of direct concern to them from childhood onwards like commerce and cow protection. They could not learn from books the day-to-day changes in market trends nor the art of dealing with people. In any case, there were no books available then to teach such matters. So the *Vaiśyā* boys did not receive education to any high degree. They acquired an elementary knowledge of the *Vēdhās*, and learned religious practices and the *śāsthrās* only to the extent needed for their trade or occupation. But from childhood onwards they were trained in their work directly by their father or grandfather and thus got to know first-hand the secrets of their trade and the skills required for it.

'Mānava', 'Maṅākkan'

Sishyā and '*vidhyārthin*' in Sanskrit are known as '*māṅavan*' or '*maṅākkan*' in Tamil poetry the word is *māṅī*.' It occurs in the passage dealing with the Vamana incarnation in the Divyaprabandham. 'Mānava' means a 'man' . The human race began from Manu. That is how we have 'manuja', 'manushya' and '*māṅavan*' in Sanskrit - the Tamil *'mānidan'*, 'mānudan' etc., 'Man' in English is also related to Manu. He who has 'manas', the capacity to think, is a man. Westerners say that man is a thinking animal. 'Manava' means a man'*Māńavan*' means child, boy. Since education is imparted from childhood the student is called '*māńavan*' or '*mańākkan*'. The Tamil '*māńi*' is also from this, but like '*māńavan*' it does not denote a student of any caste. '*Māńi*' means a *brahmachārin* who has had his *upanayanā*. Such usage could be traced to the fact that in the old days students were mostly Brahmin *brahmachārins* - and the usage persisted in later times.

The fact that Brahmin children had special education in the old days did not give rise to any misgivings among others. These latter did not need *gurukulavāsā* for their way of life or occupation. They had the good sense to realize that when necessary they could consult the Brahmin on difficult technical points. They also did not feel that there was anything wrong about the fact that 'he (the Brahmin) alone studied certain subjects, that he alone lived according to a certain discipline.' They found satisfaction in the belief that everyone carried out his duty according to his caste or family and that, as a result, there would be all-round happiness and fulfilment. 'The *Vēdhās* that the Brahmin chants and the sacrifices that he performs are intended for our well-being also. The life of severe discipline enjoined on him points a goal to us also. Let him therefore keep doing his work according to his way of life. Let us not go and interfere with it. Let us not compete with him or have any feeling of rivalry with him.' Such was the attitude of people for ages. And as long as this attitude prevailed life in the community was orderly and harmonious.

System of Labour Not Affected

The Buddha and the *Jīnā* misunderstood this system of education and life. It is possible that their view was influenced by how the Brahmins of their time conducted themselves. The Brahmins then must have been proud of being high-born without however living a life of religious discipline and without acquiring *Vedhā*ntic knowledge. But, instead of trying to correct them and restore them to the true path of Hindu dharma, the Buddha and the *Jīnā* said: 'The very object is wrong. There must be no caste division. The division of caste in the *Vēdhic* dharma is discriminatory.' Human nature is such that when the common people heard such talk they began to lose their faith in the old order slightly. 'We will do what they (supporters of *Vēdhic* dharma) do not do for you.' In this manner the Buddhists and *Jainās* organized their religions without caste. They taught their basic texts (the *śāsthrās* and arts) in the language of the common people in order to make them easier for students in big educational institutions. Was not such an arrangement a big boost to conversion?

Notwithstanding all this there was an important feature of society at the time to be noted. Even as conversions to Buddhism and Jainism were going on, the system of hereditary occupations was not disturbed. It means the even when faith in *Vēdhic* observances and *Vēdhānthā* was in a somewhat weakened state, and the position of Brahmins as leaders among the common people was somewhat shaken, people continued to carry on their hereditary occupations. Varṅa-dharma did not die away so far as non-Brahmins were concerned. The non-Brahmin did not perform any sacrifices and he was little involved in philosophical inquiry. He paid heed to the proponents of the new religions about not accepting the leadership of Brahmins, but he hardly tried to examine or understand the concepts or doctrine of the new religions.

Generally speaking, any new movement gains support from its opposition to certain things. It does not, to the same extent, gain acceptance for its rules of conduct or creed. When Gandhiji said, 'Drive out the white man', people united under him to oppose the foreigner. But how many who claim to be his followers live according to his teachings of *Ahimsā*, truth, discipline and devotion to *Īswarā*? Not many, it will be sadly noted. We carried on a big struggle not so much against the adharma of foreign rule as for the freedom to live as we like. When Gandhiji himself wanted to bind us to a certain dharma we did not like to submit to it. We love to point a finger at the faults of others and oppose them instead of realizing our own faults and trying to correct ourselves. If I were to speak one word asking you to hold a conference or a convention to oppose atheism or conversion, you would do so at once, make hard-hitting speeches and pass resolutions. But if I were to tell you to live according to the *sāsthrās*, would you pay any heed to it? No. Similaly, the common people did not follow the dharma or ideas of Buddhism and Jainism. In this context, mention must be made of one feature of the new religions which it was not possible to practice. They held up *Ahimsā* and renunciation as ideals to be followed by all people, unlike our religion which makes compromises. Jainism, particularly, has the severest regimen to torment one's body. Buddhism and Jainism are not like Hinduism which teaches happy and easy step-by-step ways of progress towards the highest ideal. So, though the Buddhist and *Jainā* religions had a wide following, their adherents did not practice their teachings with any sense of conviction.

The system of hereditary occupations, it is important to note, was not given up. People continued to practice the hereditary system because of the realization that to give it up would mean confusion about who would do what. Besides, it would result in the rise of rivalry and jealousy among various sections of society and the breakdown of life in the community in general. The edicts of *Asōkā* and other kings belonging to the Buddhist-*Jainā* traditions proclaim that even during their reigns varṇa-dharma was prevalent and that they too respected it.

This may be confirmed without any room for doubt if we consider the following. (Here the Paramaguru examines the history of India relating to the period under discussion). Subsequent to the time of Buddha and the *Jīnā* there appeared exponents of Tharka-*śāsthrā* like Udayan*āchāryā*, Mīmāmsākas like *Kumārilabhattā* who gave the greatest importance to the performance of *Vēdhic* rites and a life lived according to the *Vēdhās* and, finally, our own *Āchāryā* (Śankarā), the Vēdhānthin. They held debates with the exponents of Buddhism and Jainism and triumphed over them. As a result the eternal *Vēdha dharma* with its *Varnāśrama* system was restored to its old glory. This is a fact supported by history.

But according to the history written by Europeans with the deliberate purpose of maligning Hindus - and their views are accepted as sacrosanct by many of our own people today - Buddhism and Jainism were a powerful force in the period between the advent of those religions and the birth of *Sankarāchāryā*. If this were true how would it have been possible to restore the *Vēdhic* varna system? There is no proof to sustain the belief that, after all people had become one caste, they were again divided according to the varna-dharma throughout the country, during the time of *Sankara Bhagavadpādhā*, on orders issued thus : 'You be a Brahmin, you a Kshathriya, you a *Vaiśyā* and you a member of the fourth varna.' Fortunately, like so many other stories concocted in the name of history, there is no account to substantiate the restoration of the varna system in this manner. Such an account will not be accepted by any intelligent person.

The system of hereditary occupations had existed for centuries, naturally as it were, and it would have been equally natural for people born in particular caste or community to carry on, without questioning, the occupation handed down from generation to generation. However, once this system of caste-based occupations was discontinued it would not be possible for anyone to revive it. 'you be of this caste - let you be of this other caste: 'Why can't he be in that caste? I will be in another caste.' If

Budhdhism and Jainism had spread all over this vast country and a new society without any differences of caste had been established, it would have been impossible to impose varṅa-dhama again on a nationwide basis.

It is universally accepted that during the time of *Šankarāchāryā* all non-Hindu religions had already begun to decline. But, if all the people in the country had given up their hereditary occupations, it would have been impossible for a single individual even of *Šankarā's* stature to bring them all again into the varṅa-dharma fold. That he accomplished such a task with the help of a ruler is also not known. There is no historical evidence at all, nor any proof in literature, that *Varṅāśrama* was re-established by royal edict. When a king like Ninrasīr *Nedumāran* embraced Jainism his common subjects were probably afraid to go to temples, or to practice the rites of our religion openly, but it would be preposterous to suggest that all of them embraced either of the two new faiths.

Even during the period when Buddhism and Jainism had a considerable following, people did not give up their hereditary occupations. It means that a change in religious thinking was not accompanied by a change in the pattern of worldly life and that the caste system still flourished. That is why when the saint *Sambandhar* turned back a king to Hinduism from another religion, the common people abandoned their fear, started going to temples again and practiced the *Vēdhic* dharma. Many of those who had embraced other faiths returned to the Hindu fold. However it may be, the system of occupations based on caste remained unaffected throughout (irrespective of conversion or re-conversion).

Buddhism and Jainism Never Took Root On a Nationwide Basis

Buddhism and Jainism did not take root on a nationwide scale. On the whole, the structure of Hindu society was not affected by the new religions to any significant extent. If you look at the question from a religious, and not from a social point of view, you will see that Brahmins and others, with their special involvement in religion, did not embrace the new faiths in large numbers. Koon Pandyan embraced Jainism but his wife and his chief minister *Kulachirayar* did not follow his example.

Above all, to consider what is particularly relevant to our subject, not many non-Brahmins received their education from the Buddhist or *Jainā* schools. As stated earlier, they continued to carry on their hereditary occupations. Since they could receive practical training from their elders at home they had no need to go to any school. However, a very small number of non-Brahmins must have joined the Buddhist or *Jainā* schools since they thought these institutions taught all subjects without observing any caste distinction. However, in proportion to the total population they were small in number. Even so, schools bigger in size and larger in number than before came to be established for their sake.

It must also be mentioned that the number of people who joined the Buddhist *bhikshu* sangha formed a very small percentage of the community. Though it is true that the *bhikshu*-dharma so expanded as to become a target of ridicule, it does not mean that a large percentage of people renounced the world and became monks. In the earlier period the majority of people who had renounced the world and become sanyāsins were Brahmins but they did so after living through the first three āsramās. A few Brahmins received sanyāsa directly while they were yet in the *brahmacharyāśrama* (bachelorhood). If you take the number of sanyāsins then to be ½% or 1% of the population, after the advent of Buddhism and Jainism, when bhikshus were accepted from all castes, the corresponding percentage could not be more than 4 or 5. The remaining, who formed more than 90% must have continued to live their life as before. However, when you find three doctors in a place instead of the usual one, you feel that there are too many. Similarly, when the monks who had formed ½% or 1% of the population increased to 4% or 5% it must have been felt that there were too many of them. Also, unlike Hindu sanyāsins, who lived individually (that is each by himself), the Buddhist monks lived in groups, as a sangha, and since they stayed in one place and conducted schools there it looked as if they constituted a large community.

It would be difficult for a society to tolerate or suffer the strain of 4% or 5% of its strength becoming sanyāsins sworn to observe very strict rules of life. As a reaction to this, the discipline in such a society would be diluted. This is precisely what happened.

So far as the social structure of the country was concerned, during the Buddhist and *Jainā* periods the system of labour according to the varṅa-dharma was not particularly affected. And in the religious sphere, though there was some laxity in the matter of *Vēdhic* observances and though *Vēdhic* education also suffered slightly they did not altogether lose their force. Nor did the non-*Vēdhic* religions flourish to any great extent on a countrywide basis.

There were, however, rare occasions when non-*Vēdhic* religions flourished with the support of the state. On the intellectual level also they had some support. But during these times a Sankarā or a *Sambandhar* came to restore the *Vēdhic* religion to a state even brighter than before.

All European historians are not partisan in their accounts. There are individuals everywhere who respect the truth and institutions also. Take the case of Oxford University. It has earned a name for itself for its impartiality and for the authenticity of its inquiries and views on any subject. If this university publishes a book on a topic once, it does not regard it as the last word on the subject. It keeps carrying out further research in it. As a result of fresh investigations, if new material is discovered and if such material is authentic, it is accepted courageously and brought out in a revised edition of the book, or in an altogether new work. The university has published a history of India in this manner.(A professor of history states that the Paramaguru must be referring to Vincent Smith's The Oxford History of India. He also points out that the observations of the Paramaguru must be based on the following passage in the book).

'It must be clearly understood that Brahmanical Hinduism continued to exist and to claim innumerable adherents throughout the ages. It may well be doubted if Buddhism can be correctly described as having been the prevailing religion of India as a whole at any time. The phrase Buddhist period'to be found in many books is false and misleading. Neither a Buddhist nor a Jain period ever existed. From time to time Buddhism and Jainism obtained exceptional success and an unusually large percentage of adherents in the population of one kingdom or another, but neither heresy ever superseded Brahmanical Hinduism.')

It is stated in this book very clearly: 'In every period in the history of India Buddhism and Jainism have gained great influence in one or two of its many kingdoms. A large proportion of the population of these kingdoms have also embraced these religions. But, if anybody claims that either of these two faiths had at any time spread all over the country, it must be seriously questioned. From the beginning, the Hindu religion of Brahmins has been a living force in every age. It is a matter to be understood without any doubt that there were a great many people following it in every age. A 'Buddhist period'and a '*Jainā* period'in the history of India are spoken of in a number of books. This is wrong, an erroneous view presented deliberately. There has never been a Buddhist period nor a *Jainā* period. Neither Buddhism nor Jainism ever pushed out Hinduism totally nor did either take its place, though they did flourish in one or two religions or kingdoms.'

I started with the subject of education and, if I have talked about other things, they are not unrelated. What is the purpose of education? Is it not the quest for truth, for the truth being revealed? At present our children are taught views that are contrary to the truth. They are taught that the Buddha and the *Jīnā*, who appeared not long after the beginnings of civilization in our country, created a stir in the life of the people which had been based on the *Vēdhic* tradition. They are also told that the new religious leaders established their faiths on a firm footing throughout the land. Should I not bring to the notice of all concerned that such a preposterous view is taught as history?

The excellence of the gurukula system is underlined by the fact that it was based on nurturing certain qualities in the student like purity of heart and life. The system also shows that true education is not fostered through the establishment of a big university and the creation of textbook committees and similar institutions.

What do we mean when we say that *Sankarāchāryā* or *Jnānasambandhar* restored the Hindu dharma to its old glory? They transformed the state of religious affair during the time the Hindu dharma had declined in various parts of the country and other religions had become dominant. More significantly, they established the supremacy of the Hindu *siddhānthā* among the learned and thinking sections of the people. There is no reason to believe that the hereditary system of labour based on caste - which is an important social aspect of Hindu dharma - had gone into decay and that a religious leader who came later re-established it.

(There is absolutely no possibility of a religious leader bringing about a social change of such proportions without the help of an imperial ruler).

One particularly remarkable feature of *Āchāryā*'s greatness is that, though he accomplished what no one else could have accomplished, he did not possess the slightest self-pride. That is why in all his works, commentaries, *prakaraṅa* texts and hymns, there is not a single mention about himself. This has led to differences of opinion about his age and other matters concerning his life. From a passage in one of his works - and it is the only reference relevant to our subject - we learn without any room for doubt that during his time there was no ruler in India whose writ ran throughout the country, no ruler who could be called a '*sārvabhauma*' (imperial ruler or 'universal monarch').

There is a mention of *Dēvās* in the Brahmasūthrā (first chapter, third pada, 33rd sūthrā). Commenting on it Sankarā says that the *Dēvās* indeed do exist and that they have contacts with humans. 'Because no one from among us has the capacity to make contacts with the *Dēvās*, it is not right for us to ask how men could have made contacts with them in earlier times. One who so asks can also argue perversely that, since at present (that is during *Āchāryā*'s time) there is no *sārvabhauma* in our country, there was no *sārvabhauma* at all at any time and that, since the *Varṅāsrama* system has deteriorated, there was no *Varṅāsrama* system at all at any time.

What do we understand from this statement? Even an imperial ruler cannot enforce the *Varṅāsrama* system all over the country through a fiat. Let us consider such a possibility as a hypothesis. But the fact is that there was no such ruler during the time of *Āchāryā*. Similarly, if varṅa-dharma flourished after him, with its earlier vitality, it means that even during his lifetime it could not have altogether ceased to exist.

Āchāryā's statement that there was no *sārvabhauma* during his time confirms the point I made earlier. During the time of Buddhism and Jainism, when our rulers subscribed to either of the two religions with their emphasis on *Ahimsā*, prosperous and powerful empires could not emerge and sustain themselves. The nation was also at the time subject to invasion by less civilized hordes from abroad. *Āchāryā* was born during such a period when there was no *sārvabhauma*. Let this pass. Even if there was no great empire at the time varṅa-dharma had not totally ceased to exist.

You may ask: 'Did you not say, did you not quote what the *Āchāryā* had himself mentioned in connection with his statement about the absence of an imperial ruler during his time that the *Varṅāśrama* system had deteriorated? Now you speak differently and say that it had not totally become extinct.'

My answer is this. The fact is neither had the *Varṅāśrama* dharma totally become extinct nor did it flourish in all its strength and perfection. *Āchāryā* himself observes that in his time the caste division was '*avyavasthitaprāya*'. It means not that it had ceased to exist altogether, but that it had become weakened. It must have become 'irrrgular', that is without the required discipline. Probably my earlier description that it had remained 'intact' is not quite right. At the same time it is not true to say that the system had ceased to exist.

This is how I picture to myself the state of affairs then. The influence of the Brahmin must have declined because of his conduct having been such as to invite criticism. Also the common people must have been turned against him by making them believe that he had created a 'discriminatory' social system. The sacrifices he conducted and his exposition of dharma must have reached a low level. Though these factors which give spiritual strength to the community had declined, the common people must have carried on their work according to the hereditary system of occupations since it helped the smooth functioning of worldly life. So far as they were concerned they were ignorant about the concepts of *Vēdhānthā* and Buddhism and Jainism. They had, to the best of their ability, followed the ideals of life of Brahmins of virtue, had worshipped *Rāmā* and *Krishṅā* and had thereby become mature within. The majority of them now, since they did not have the leadership of Brahmins, did not become spiritually elevated but somehow practiced the worship of the deities of their choice.

When *Vēdhic* leadership was not available any longer, people fell victim to fierce, disgusting or fearsome practices of worship like those of the *Kāpālikās*. Those who were not in their fold paid obeisance to the Buddha or the *Thīrthankara*, instead of Rama and *Krishṅā*, *Kāpāli* or *Kāḻi*. But it would not be true to claim that they had any knowledge of the doctrines of these religions or faiths.

Leadership and the Common People

You may ask : 'Like the Brahmins, did not the Buddhist and *Jainā* monks also provide leadership to the common people?' I must say 'No', I say so not because I am obliged to give such an answer as a Hindu guru. I do so with all impartiality. There were so many great men among Buddhists and *Jainās*, so many great monks, so many men of erudition, so many philanthropists and so many men known for their self-sacrifice. I myself have some admiration for the philosophy of *Nāgārjuna*.It is also true that these bhikshus, more than the Brahmins, lived in close association with the common people and mixed with them. Even so they did not provide leadership to them. Why?

What is leadership? Leadership consists in making others follow one's path. They may be said to possess the quality of leadership who, others think, may be followed as an ideal. In other words, he who is followed as an ideal or example has the quality of leadership. The common people would like to follow the example of those who are householders with wives and children, not those like bhikshus who have turned away completely from life and perform the severest of austerities. They may have devotion and respect for such people who have renounced the world. But since they do not set an example of how life is to be lived they cannot be regarded as leaders.

In the *Vēdhic* dharma the Brahmins were looked upon as an ideal. And since they spent the greater part of their lives as householders, other communities could follow their example in practice. And indeed they did so.

When the Buddha and the *Jīnā* founded their new religions without any caste distinctions, there appeared a good number of monks. The result was a decline in the quality of *sanyāsa āśrama*. It so happened later that many of these monks had to seek escape from their monastic life, so much so the bhikshus came to be scoffed at by the common people.

To explain the matter further. To start with, the monks practiced rigorous austerities compared to the householder and were elevated to a high position. But the common people could not benefit from their leadership (because they were beyond their reach). Later, when a number of bhikshus themselves were seen to be guilty of lapses, they became the target of ridicule since their having abased themselves and taken a direction opposite to what would have made them leaders. In this context it is sufficient to read Mahendra Pallava's (Maththa Vilāsa Prahasanam).

The great Achievements of Ādhi Śankarā

Interest in religious doctrines was confined to a few learned people, that is to the world of scholars. At first Udayana, later *Kumārila* and others and, finally *Āchāryā* - all three conducted disputations with panditas and refuted the tenets of Buddhism and Jainism.

In this context, *Āchāryā*'s performance was astounding. It was not that he merely completed the task of the *Thārkikās* and Mīmāmsākas who had half driven out Buddhism and Jainism from the country. Tharka and Mīmāmsā were confined to the scholars and could hardly be the religion of the common people. The Adhvaitha of the *Āchāryā* also was understood only by the learned. More than understanding it, realizing it (or having anubhava) was possible only for one in a lakh or a crore. The *Āchāryā*, who established such an abstruse doctrine, also did immense good to the people at another level. After refuting other religions he formulated a system of worship that was shorn of any vulgarity or gruesome practices. It was a system not only for the learned but for the entire society. *Āchāryā* restored *Vēdhic karmānushtānā* (system of religious observances) to its earlier glory, ensured the advancement of virtuous Brahmins and made the rest of the community go forward under their leadership.

'Leadership' means silent leadership. The Brahmins lived unobtrusively in a spirit of self-sacrifice and discipline, practicing the ideals of ahimsa, devotion, love and non-possessiveness, and creating a sense of fearlessness in others. 'Leadership' was what the common people derived on their own from the 'leader' as an example for their lives.

It was *Āchāryā* who made possible through this leadership the advancement of the Āthman which gave a meaning to the life of the entire community and uplifted them. What is India? India means dharma, devotion and the richness of the Āthman. *Āchāryā* infused this spirit of India, this oxygen in the people and made India live again. As I stated earlier, the appellation '*Āchāryā*' supremely fitted Sankarā. He functioned according to the qualities essential to an *āchāryā*, he contributed not only to the intellectual progress of people but also nourished their heart and Self and provided the inspiration for their disciplined conduct. And he taught this lesson not only to India but to the entire world.

He traveled through the whole country, triumphed over exponents of other doctrines. (Indeed these other doctrines fled the country, so to speak, after suffering defeat at his hands.) But this alone did not constitute the victory of Hinduism, because victory accomplished through argument is merely intellectual. How is the refutation of other religions sufficient to create a sense of discipline among the people, how is it enough to make them devout or to give at least the wiser and more mature among them the realization of the Āthman? According to me what constitutes the achievement of *Āchāryā* that is without a parallel is: apart from establishing dharma, bhakthi and Adhvaitha-*jnānā* and apart from refuting the tenets of other religions, he made his victory complete by making it the victory of the *Vēdhic* religion.

It is generally said that our *Āchāryā* established the supremacy of *jnānā* among the three paths to salvation (*karmā*, bhakthi and *jnānā*). This is of course true, but it was again he who re-established the path of *karmā* and bhakthi by giving them new life. *Karmā* and dharma are interconnected the two go hand in hand. According to the *Vēdhic śāsthrās*, a man's dharma, that is the way of life, is based on his *kula karmā* or occupation according to caste. The kuladharma and swadharma are used in the *Gītā* and other *śāsthrās* in the sense of *kula karmā* and, what arises from birth, sva*karmā*.

What is the path cut out for us by our *āchāryā*? Attaining purity of the *chiththa* or consciousness by performing the work laid down by the *śāsthrās* is the first step. Meditating on *Īswarā* with the *chiththa* so made pure, that is through devotion, takes us a step further. Through that very meditation thought *chiththa* itself is erased and, finally, Adhvaitha-*jnānā* is obtained. This *jnānā* means becoming one with *Īswarā* (in other words it is *Īswarā* uniting with *Īswarā*).

That which deals with the *karmā* of each one of us is the *Dharma Šāsthrā* or Smruthi. That which fosters bhakthi is embodied in the *Purāṅās*. And that which provides the means of *Adhviatha-jnānā* (awarness of non-duality) is *Vēdhānthā*, i.e. the Upanishads, the crest of the *Šruthi* or the *Vēdhās*. The *Āchāryā* is the abode of all three - of the *Šruthi* for *jnānā*, of the Smruthi for *karmā* and of the *Purāṅās* for bhakthi. He is indeed a temple of all three, declares a verse.

> *'Šruthi-Smruthi-Purāṅānām ālayam karuṅālayam*
> *Namāmi Bhagavadpādha Šankaram Lōka-Šankaram'*

Šankara Bhagavadpādhā, the *Āchāryā* of *jnānā*, did good not only to a few people who had attained maturity within. He was the abode of compassion since he did good to all mankind by showing them the paths of *karmā* and bhakthi . ('sam' means 'good' or 'wellbeing'; 'kara' means 'to do'. Šankara Bhagavadpādhā was 'Lōka-Šankarā'. He did good to all the world, all mankind).

The *Āchāryā*, through his intellectual work, brought Brahmins back to their mother religion. Just as in the old system of education knowledge was woven together with *anushtānā* or religious observances, he bound them to *karmānushtānā*. In this way he was instrumental not only in their attaining purity of mind (*chiththa*-šuddhi) but in their becoming an ideal to be followed by all members of societcy, an example to them of how life is to be lived.

Whan *Āchāryā* visited a place he held disputations with the learned people there. He also restored the temples of the place to their old glory, established *Yanthrās* in them and rendered deities of a fierce aspect benign.

It will not be doing adequate justice to *Āchāryā* by glorifying him again and again only as the teacher of Adhvaitha. In this way we do not portray him or his work fully. The goal he taught mankind was Adhvaitha and he established it as an unshakeable doctrine or system. But those who can inwardly realize the truth of Adhvaitha are few. *Āchāryā* was a benefactor of all people - not only of a few - because he taught them the supreme means of attaining purity of *chiththa*, through *karmā* based on the *śāsthrās*. Besides, he fostered bhakthi among all by reviving temple worship on a big scale. He created the system of worship called '*Shanmatha*' which provides for the worship of one or more from among six deities according to one's choice or wish (worship of '*ishta Dēvathā*'). Each deity is regarded as an aspect or form of the *Paramāthman* and, as such, its devotee does not look down upon the worship of other deities. *Āchāryā* also initiated the '*Panchāyathana* Pūjā'. In this manner he broke down the differences and quarrel among Hindus and reunited them.

Starting with '*āchāryā*' and 'up*adhyāyā*' and the differences between them I have digressed far to speak about the greatness of *Āchāryā*. But I will tell you how this topic is related to the subject of educational institutions. Other religions (Buddhism and Jainism) established big schools and colleges and kept inviting to them students belonging to all castes. But the common people were interested only in carrying on their hereditary occupations. So, as stated before, the home itself was the school for their children and they did not join the schools started by the Buddhists or *Jaināś* in any considerable numbers. Even those who joined them must have dropped out after the first two years or so. Only those who were hereditarily involved in learning and philosophy - first Brahmins and then *Kshathriyās* - must have joined the new schools in large numbers and completed the entire course. We come across, here and there, in the story of the Buddha's life, accounts of his having debates with Brahmins and of Brahmins embracing his religion.

The Buddha opposed *Brahmañyam* but it was from Brahmins that he received much support not only for his religion but for his schools. After all, Brahmins only were mainly interested in debates on religion and philosophy.

To sum up, it was during the time that Buddhism and Jainism flourished that a system of education common to all, with a variety of teachers working in the same school, came up. But even during this period the caste system prevailed.

Comparing Past and Present

We need not rack our brains by going into ancient history to study the subject of caste. Caste consciousness has been in our blood from time immemorial. Europeans, particularly Christian missionaries, have attacked varña-dharma with greater harshness and sarcasm than most others. They too, like the Buddhists and *Jainās* much before them, have established schools and colleges. But with one difference. The Buddhists and *Jainās*, realizing the need to impart sound knowledge to the students, included the *Vēdhic chathurdaśa-vidhyā*-s (fourteen branches of learning) in the curriculum along with their own doctrines. If caste ceased to have any force as a result of the propagation of their doctrines and people no longer carried on their hereditary occupantions, what would have been the result? There would have been a vacuum in society and the Buddhists and *Jaināas* would not have found a substitute for the system of hereditary occupations. It must have been for this reason, for society to continue to function properly, that they let the system go on.

But what happened during the regime of the British? They threw to the winds the *śāsthrās* based on *Vēdhic* learning. As a substitute for the work traditionally performed by all people, they brought, one after another, machinery, coal, steam, electricity, etc. The system of occupations according to caste almost came to an end. Apart from this, they cleverly did another kind of damage by creating the lure of material prosperity. They also propagated ill-will amongst communities by promoting 'Āryan-Dravidian' racist feelings on the pretext of carrying out research in history.

Whatever the fate of the other occupations, the lifelong occupation of *Vēdhic* studies for which there is not - and there cannot be - any substitute was brought to near extinction. Our own people, especially those who are entitled to the *Vēdhic* 'occupation' (the custodians of the *Vēdhās*), have contributed their 'service' towards this end and earned *pūnyā* or merit as a result! The consequence of all this is that, but for a handful of old-fashioned adherents of the *Vēdhās* like me, all others think that caste is a great indignity and that it is part of an uncivilised system. However, although the division of labour on the basis of heredity has all but ceased to exist and although all people believe that this will be beneficial to our progress, not more than ten out of a hundred come forward boldly for intercaste marriages. This means that, even in this state of decay of caste and of traditional values, consciousness of caste is ingrained in all of us. Are not elections still contested mostly on the basis of caste? It is no wonder then that during the Buddhist-*Jainā* periods, when there were no factories and when the economy was based on each village having its own handicrafts, the various castes continued to function according to their occupations.

On another matter too we could make a guess about conditions in the past on the basis of the situation prevailing today. Who are the people to have taken to Western education for long and to have become proficient in it? The answer is Brahmins. Until the protest movement was engendered by the feeling that Brahmins had come to occupy most of the posts, tradesmen, artisans, etc., did not take to Western education. Originally they had stuck to their traditional work telling themselves. 'We have a family occupation and that is enough to fill our bellies.' It was the Brahmin, with his concern for knowledge, who took to Western education when new courses like 'arts' 'science', etc., came up during the British regime.

Let us consider the situation. The rajas had ceased to rule then and the Brahmin therefore no longer enjoyed royal patronage. He not only lost faith in the grace of *Īśwarā*, he ceased to possess qualities like courage and the spirit of self-sacrifice needed to pursue the dharma he was expected to pursue even at the cost of his life. That was the time when the white man cleverly tempted him with the opportunity of jobs and for this he had to take to the system of education instituted by him. The Brahmin succumbed to the temptation and became the first slave to Western education.

First was created the purely imaginary fear of 'Brahmin supremacy' and, on the pretext of putting an end to it, the Englishman established schools and colleges with the purpose of weakening Hinduism itself. And those who joined them were mostly Brahmins. This led to 'Brahmin supremacy' in another sense and, to oppose it, the Justice Party, the Kazhagam, etc., were formed, consequently weakening Hindu unity and undermining Hindu society. All this had been according to the Englishman's own plan. From this one may guess what happened in earlier times when followers of other religions (Buddhists and *Jainās*) established educational institutions for all without any distinction of caste.

Today, even though people do not pursue their hereditary occupations, there are machines and factories to do all work and there is no damage done to society even if people do not carry on their hereditary work. But in the old days it was not like now. So the majority of the labouring classes would have carried on their hereditary jobs without joining any of the schools. The subjects in which the Brahmin was particularly interested like the *śāsthrās*, philosophy, poetry, astronomy (also astrology) must have been extended their frontiers day by day. But the subjects in which the *Kshathriyās* were interested did not register any similar progress. No new methods of warfare were developed nor did the science of warfare advance spectacularly as in modern times. The same could be said about the subjects in which the third varṅa, constituted by the *Vaiśyās*, was interested'there was no day-by-day advancement of the *śāsthrās* connected with trade and commerce, no new courses like B.Com., Business Management and C.A.

There were no factories then and the question of establishing schools or polytechnics for members of the fourth varṅa did not arise. So their system of learning continued as before - that is learning while working with their elders. The new schools created on a big scale did not attract communities other than Brahmins in large numbers. The majority of people belonging to the non-Brahmin communities believed that their livelihood would be affected by going to school and by learning subjects that were of no practical use to them. Who then, among the non-Brahmin castes, went to these schools? The affluent, those who had so much property that they did not have to worry about earning their daily bread. There were also a few who were perhaps not well-to-do but were indifferent to worldly life and possessed the hunger to know the eternal truth. Among such men was Appar Swāmin (great Tamil saint-poet). He belonged to the fourth varṅa and acquired learning by studying in a *Jainā* school. But the percentage of non-Brahmins who went to the new Buddhist or *Jainā* schools was very small. Next to Brahmins, *Kshathriyās* joined these institutions in considerable numbers, then *Vaiśyās* and people belonging to the fourth varṅa - in that order.

When Macaulay's system of education was introduced so 'nicely' (The Paramaguru uses the 'nicely' with all its South Indian nuances of meaning, suggesting things done so smoothly and skillfully as to conceal their real intent) in the last century as to uproot our religious and cultural traditions without our becoming even aware of it, who joined the new schools? Mostly Brahmin children. Similar must have been the case with the Buddhist and *Jainā* schools started centuries earlier. The majority of those who joined them must have been Brahmins. The Brahmin swadharma must have gone into decline then, though not to the same extent as today. The new religions could not have taken root otherwise. In the name of *Ahimsā* the Brahmins'most important duty (occupation) of performing sacrifices came under attack. In works like the Sankara-Vijayam, we see that the *Dēvās* (celestials) complain before *Īśwarā* about the decline in the duty of the performance of sacrifices (yajnānushtānā). Since their traditional occupations and means of livelihood were affected, Brahmins must have embraced the new Religions and become Buddhist and *Jainā* monks in greater numbers than people of other communities. They must have also formed a large part of entrants to the new schools. However, it would not be true to say that all Brahmins embraced either of the new religions in order to fill their bellies. Many of them must have become converts out of a genuine interest in philosophy and education.

Through the observance of swadharma and the meditation of the Gāyathrī, Brahmins acquired *chiththa-Suddhi* and their intelligence got illumined. In this respect Brahmins must have suffered a slight setback during the period we are speaking about. But there is something called tradition or *pārampĀryā*: certain qualities and skills are in the blood. (So it must have been with the Brahmins who joined the new schools). It is only after the lapse of many generations that the traditionally acquired qualities are totally eroded. My great anxiety is that we should not face such an eventuality in the generation after our own. Once it has been pedaled a bicycle keeps going on its own momentum. Similarly, without any pedaling in the form of new *anushtānā* on their part, Brahmins can go forward to some extent because of the push given them by their forefathers. This hereditary 'pedal force' of intellectual brilliance stood the Brahmins in good stead even during the period when the other religions prospered. History repeats itself. We have seen the same thing happening before our eyes with the English system of education coming into force. Brahmins, more than others, had the appetite to learn about the doctrines of the new religions.

From the time of *Asōkā*, when Buddhism was propagated in foreign countries, we developed contacts with the intellectuals of old civilisations like Greece and China. This was a fresh incentive for Brahmins in their intellectual pursuits. The need arose for us to learn from foreign countries such aspects as we did not know of subjects like astronomy. We had to teach them subjects they did not know like geometry, surgery (the *sāsthrā* associated with Susruta). etc. This provided a fresh encouragement to Brahmins to join the new schools. In these institutions students belonging to all castes from India studied together. There were foreign students who studied under our *upādhyāyās*. Similarlly, teachers from abroad taught classes which included our students. However, among the students from our own country Brahmins predominated, followed by *Kshathriyās*, *Vaisyās* and *Sūdrās* in that order.

Buddhist-Jainā Education

Let us forget what the Buddhists and *Jainās* did on the pretext of propagating religious doctrines or holding philosophical discussions. Let us forget how these great advocates of *Ahimsā* pushed down followers of other religions from the terraces or rooftops of buildings. Let us also forget how they set fire to buildings belonging to the institutions of other religions, their

Matālayās. But we cannot find fault with their education system for such was the excellence achieved by it. Nor can we find fault with them with regard to their propagation of knowledge or of philosophy. Their contribution to literature has also not been inconsiderable. Among the two - the Buddhists and *Jainās* - the Buddhists had greater influence in the North, while the *Jainās* had a greater impact in the South.

In Tamil the school is called *pa_l_li* from the fact that in the old days education was given to people belonging to all castes in the *Jainā* monasteries called *pa_l_lis*. The suffix '*pa_l_li*' in many place names denotes that the place in question had *Jainā* schools. There is a belief that (Thiru) *Chirāpa_l_li (Thiruchirāpa_l_li)* is so called because it had a school belonging to the *Jainā* monk *Chirā*.

The word '*Pa_l_li*' has a number of interesting associations. It means in Tamil 'reclining' or 'going to sleep' æ *pa_l_li*-arai is bedroom. The *Jainā* monks who lived in the caves of the mountains used finely polished stones or slabs for beds. Such stones are still to be seen in the Pandyan region and places like *Tiruchirāpa_l_li*.

Jainā monks pulled out each hair of the head by its root so as to have a smooth plate. They got the name *Sramaña* (*śamana* in Tamil) from the fact that they suffered bodily pain. But, when there was an indiscriminate increase in the number of monks, they fell to the temptation of a life of ease and one result of this was they made stone as smooth or soft as cotton to make beds.

In saying this I am not attacking or ridiculing the followers of any religion. I merely wish to point out that an ideal suffers when it is attempted to be practiced on a wide and popular basis.

(After the about of Islam and its spread in the South the mosque also came to be called '*pa_l_li* (*Vāsal*)' in the same way as the *Jainā* and Buddhist *pa_l_li*. This led to confusion among ignorant people about religions other than their own; even today some people in Kēralā call Muslims Bauddhas). Not only mosques, churches are also called *palli*s in Kēralā. When a Hindu embraces Christianity or Islam he is said to 'join the Mārgā', which contains a clear reference to conversion in earlier times to the Mārgā or Buddhism).

I was speaking to you about the contribution made by Buddhists and *Jainās* to literature. The five great Tamil poetical works belong to them. What is regarded as a work of the utmost importance in Tamil. *Śilappadhikaram*, was composed by the *Jainā* monk Ilango. *Maniimēkalai* is by the Buddhist *Chīththalai Chaththanār*. *Kuṅdalakēsi* is also a Buddhist poetical work. *Jivakachinthāmani* is by the Jain (*Samana*) *Thiruththakkadēvar*. The author of *Kālingattuparani* is also a *Jainā*. The grammatical work *Naṅnūl*, *Yāpparunkalakkārikai* (a work on poetics), Aranerisaram (it is a work on renunciation), *Nāladiyār* (a work on ethics) - all these are by *Jainā* Monks. The grammatical work *Vīrachōzhiyam* is by a Buddhist.

In the North there were Buddhist universities so big that their fame spread far to other countries. They had many faculties and were run efficiently and in a disciplined manner. A number of Chinese pilgrims came to India mainly to learn Buddhist doctrines and philosophy in one or another of these institutions. Recently I read in a book that Hsuan Tsang (Yuan Chwang) was one such Chinese who, after studying at *Nālandā* University, taught there and held the position equivalent to the present-day Dean.

Writing :

There was another reason for the remarkable growth of Buddhist universities.

Brahmins gave importance to memory power. They prayed specially for such power ('mayi medham'), for keenness of intelligence, and they constantly nurtured both. In this way, listening to some lesson or passage once or twice, they absorbed it in their memory. Chaste and simple living ensured that there was no waste of intellectual and physical energy in the pursuit of wordly pleasures or comforts. Through rigorous observance of religious practices, the hungers of the body were wrung out and brightness of intelligence acquired. Besides, by meditating on the Gāyathrī manthra, studying the *Vēdhās*, practicing *prāṇayāma* and observing *brahmacharyā*, the mind shone with knowledge.

Brahmins thus developed their memory power. Teaching was one of their six duties. People belonging to various fields, carrying on various trades or occupations, would come to learn from the Brahmin. In the assemblies of the learned, he would be questioned on the *śāsthrās*. On such occasions how could he keep thumbing through the pages of a book for his answer? So he had to cultivate his intellectual powers to such an extent that his mind itself would be like a library. He had to keep his memory power honed so that it always remained bright. For this he had to make certain sacrifices. All this became part of the creed of the true Brahmins. Such being the tradition, the great corpus of texts, the *Vēdhās*, got the name of *Sruthi*, that which is heard by the ear - and not read by the eye. The *Vēdhās* are called in Tamil '*Ezhuthākkiḻavi*': it means 'unwritten old text.'

If a subject is not retained in memory and instead written down in books or on palm-leaves, we will increasingly tend to neglect it, telling ourselves, 'After all it is all in the book. We can refer to it when the need arises.' The habit of memorising a text or reading it intently and grasping its meaning is on the decline. We see this happening before our eyes. Our forefathers went to the extent of stating: 'You have written it, haven't you? Well, that means it will serve no purpose.' There is a saying : 'Speak a thousand, write not even one' (Sahasram Vadha, ēkam mā likha).

A book I read recently has it that, as opposed to the practice described above (that is of Brahmins depending on their memory to learn and teach), the Buddhist introduced the method of teaching based on written texts (palm-leaves). According to the author of the book and also researchers of our own time, the 'Sūthrās' appeared a little before the time of Alexander's invasion of India, that is in the 6th century B.C. The Sūthrās contain our *śāsthrās* in a terse or aphoristic form, as for example in the Brahmasūthrā, the *Yōga*sūthrā, the Vyākaraṅasūthrā. The word 'lipikara' (one who writes) occurs in *Pāṅini's* Vyākaraṅasūthrā, also the word 'grantha', meaning a book. That we knew the art of writing (that we had a script) from the time of the Sūthrās is proved by this. However, Indians of the time kept their writing to the minimum.

According to the book I mentioned above, writing was used only for purposes like publishing royal fiats. The *śāsthrās* and literary works were not written down but memorized and taught orally. It is not only the *Vēdhic* Samhitā (collection of *manthrās*) that was not written down; even the *Brāhmanās* which explain the *Vēdhic* rites were not put down in writing. According to the author of the book, in these texts there is no mention of any bark or any kind of leather that could have served the purpose of paper then. Nor is there in it any reference to ink or any writing instrument. The author says that the earlier Brahmi script discovered belongs to the edicts of *Asōkā*, 3rd century B.C. - these are connected with Buddhism. In the *Ramāyāna* and the *Mahābhāratā* there were references to Rama and the *Pāṅdavās* receiving their *vidhyā*bhyasa, but there is no mention that they learned to write. According to the same author, in the life of the Buddha entitled Lalitavistara, there is a mention of the child Buddha (Siddhartha) having learned to write. What is heard by the ear and learnt it '*Sruthi*'; what is memorised and practiced and taught is '*Sruthi*'. Even if these could be written down, the ideal was not to make a subject 'cheap' in that manner with the likelihood of it being forgotten, so says the author of the book.

A student who learns the *Vēdhās* by reading, a '*likhitapātaka*', was looked down upon and called 'pātakāthama'. The book refered to above says that the practice of writing down the *śāsthrās* commenced with the Buddhists. And that was not without reason.

Waging wars, internal policing and working as state officials - all these formed part of Kshathriya dharma. The *Vaiśyā* had to protect cattle and carry on trade. Members of the fourth varṅa earned their livelihood by manual labour. If all these people were asked to spend many years in the gurukula in the same way as Brahmin children, insisting that they should sharpen their minds, cultivate their power of memory and learn without reading and writing, what use would be knowledge so gained in their occupation in later life? Not only would it be not useful, it might even prove to be a hindrance because according to their varṅa they had, in their childhood and youth, to learn by observation and practice the occupation they were to pursue in later life. *Kshathriyās* had to learn the use of weapons, *Vaiśyā* children had to learn trade and commerce by closely watching transactions and business practices. Others had to learn their work by apprenticing themselves to their father or grandfather.

When education was given chiefly to Brahmins teaching orally and learning by listening were found sufficient. When the Buddhists started schools for other communities along with Brahmins it became necessary to give instruction through reading and writing instead of through memorising.

Even so, communities other than Brahmins and *Kshathriyās* did not join these Buddhist institutions in a big way. Not only that, until recently, they learned the skills of their respective hereditary occupations through practical training. Or in their oral tradition they memorized the verses pertaining to their respective crafts and trades as had been the practice from early times. An *ĀyurVēdhic* physician, will reel off the verses relating to his prescription. The sthapati or master carpenter also recites verses pertaining to his job.

It has now become customary for people to put the question: 'Do you know to read and write?' Until some generations ago, village folk knew neither. But so far as their work or occupation was concerned they were better than a B.E. or a B.Tech., of today. Some of these villagers must have learnt to read and memorise a few verses and others must have memorized the same by listening to them. Only a few must have leaned to write at all. Even if they did not have any remarkable memory power, they must have been sufficiently intelligent to memorise the lessons pertaining at least to their subject.

It is not that there were no dullards among Brahmins. Also we know from the history of our past that other castes also produced men of outstanding intelligence. Such men are still to be met with in these castes.

After the appearance of big Buddhist educational institutions. It became the practice to give instruction through writing. Another reason for this practice was the continuous development in the *sāsthrās*, the emergence of new *sāsthrās*, arts, and science (*vijnānā*). How would it have been possible to preserve knowledge in all these subjects by memoring the lessons however keen one's intelligence was? So it became necessary to put down everything in writing for the purpose of teaching.

Big Vēdhic Universities

When the Buddhists and the *Jainās* became a force with the establishment of big educational institutions, could the other religions, that is the *Vēdhic* religion, lag behind?

Thus Hindus too started big schools to teach the *Vēdha-vidhyā*-s along with other subjects. There is always a new awakening in any field when there is opposition to it - also a new spurt of energy among those engaged in it. In our own times we notice how the propagation of atheism has created a new awakening among believers. People who had no devotion or neglected their religious observances, people who were no better than idlers, have come forward as believers. And this has led to a number of *kumbhābhisēkās* and the holding of religious discourses. Also people have begun to perform worship at home and observe some religious vow or other.

During the time of the Buddha, Brahmins were to some extent ignorant of their traditions. The Buddha criticized their religion and big schools were established in support of Buddhism. As a reaction to this there was a gradual awakening among a section of the *Vēdhic* community. They too wanted to start big schools like the Buddhists and acquire learning in several subjects. Brahmins joined these institutions in large numbers. Thus there emerged big educational institutions belonging to the *Vēdhic* religion and to Buddhism and Jainism as well. All this led to a growth in *Vēdhic* and non-*Vēdhic* philosophies, in literature, in the sciences and in the arts.

The *Vēdhic* religion and culture had grown without any organisation behind them and purely on the strength of the personal *anushtānā* (religious observances) of individuals. When Buddhism and Jainism developed on an organizational basis, with the cry 'Sangham *saranam gachchāmi*' ('I go to the order for refuge' 'Sangham' is usually translated as 'order', the order of monks here. It implies a 'joining together', an 'organisation'.) the need for some kind of organisation was felt among followers of our religion too. Whatever the extent to which *Āchāryā* had revived the old order it was found that our gurukulās under individual *āchāryās* were not adequate to meet the challenge of the universities belonging to the new religions. It was increasingly found necessary to create our own educational institutions on an organisd basis, each under a number of teachers, to give instruction not only in the *Vēdhās*, but in the arts and the sciences of the time. It was during this period that the *pātāśālā* began to appear along with the gurukula.

In the North such big *Vēdhic pātaśālās* were called 'tōl'. An institution similar to the elementary school is called a *pātāśālā* there. The tol teaches grammar in detail apart from astronomy, poetry, etc.

Thus there were many Hindu teaching establishments in the old days.

In earlier times, the *āchārya* was not paid any salary and he was satisfied with whatever dakshina that the student gave him after completing his education.

This class of *āchāryās* faded away and a new class of *upādhyāyās* took their place who were supported by kings, nobles and local people or by endowments.

(It was not only the Brahmin who received royal grant for carrying on his hereditary occupation but others too like the potter, the washerman, the Pūjāri who conducted the Pūjā of the village deity, the drummer, etc.).

The custom followed by the student to obtain his food in the old days was this: he gave the alms received from *bhikshā* to the guru's wife. She did her own cooking because the rites called '*Vaisvadēva*-bali' and the worship of the gods in the gurukula could not be performed with the *bhikshā* brought by the pupil. According to the *śāsthrās* a householder is not allowed to take cooked food from others. So there is separate cooking in the guru's household.

Although in olden times the rulers did not make royal endowments as was done later times for the maintenance of educational institutions, they did give donations to the *āchāryās* . This they did not only to nurture virtuous and distinguished scholars and earn their blessings but also to help them in the performance of sacrifices so essential for the prosperity of the kingdom. It was out of such donations received from the kings as well as out of the gifts of land and gold that the *āchāryā*s of ancient times maintained their gurukulās and households and performed *yāgās*. The guru's wife would feed the student with the alms he brought supplementing it with what she had cooked. She would tell the student with much affection to eat well. On festive days the guru would make him gifts of clothes, etc., and give him his blessings. Just as the student had taken refuge under the guru, surrendering himself in body and spirit the guru blessed him with all his resources of body, material and spirit.

With the disappearance of this landable situation the big schools and the system of *upādhyāyās* came. They were paid salaries from royal endowments and they were concerned only with imparting knowledge to their students.

When the frontiers of knowledge extended it became necessary for many *upādhyāyās* to work together in the same educational institution. In between, when the Brahmin dharma declined with the spread of other religions and the gurukula system weakened, similar big schools with a number of teachers had to be started to restore *Vēdha-vidhyā* to its earlier glory.

The Gurukula Elements in Big Schools

Because such new institutions were not of the same high standard as the earlier gurukulās, they should not be treated on par with present-day colleges and universities. In a sense they too were gurukulās. The students resided in the *vidhyāsālā* and studied. This does not mean that there was something like the present day hostel. In the present day hostel there is a single warden and the teachers do not stay with them. In the *vidhyāśālās* the students stayed together. A number of teachers looked after them, living with them and ensured their discipline. The teacher who taught a number of students constituting a class was also their warden. But even in the large *vidhyāśālās* when the number of gurukulās under individual teachers had decreased, the students lived under the strict discipline of their masters.

In *Thakshaśila*, which was Buddhist, the system was that each up*adhyāyā* had a certain number of children under has exclusive care. Here a number of gurukulās were conducted at the same place. But it was not like a centralised university. *Nālandā*, however, resembled the university of later times in structure. But the gurukulās of *Thakshaśila* did not qualify to be so called because the teachers were paid salaries from the fees collected from the students. If the students were unable to pay their fees they had to compensate for it by doing physical work.

In the Buddhist educational institutions of later times the teachers were monks and they lived in *vihārā*s where all their needs were met. Even so they charged their students a fee. However, their system deserves to be appreciated for the reason that under it the students were divided into groups, each being placed under a teacher. Attention was paid to each student individually.

In the *Vēdhic* school, where hundreds of students studied, it is likely *bhikshācharyā* was not practiced. Probably only those who directly went to study the *Vēdhās* and the Upanishads observed *bhikshācharyā*. The *Vēdhic* schools of later times too gave importance to religious observances without the slightest lapse on the part of the students. Indeed, this has been the living force of our great civilisation, its very life-breath.

The literature, history and royal edicts of that time will show that the quality of both students and teachers in the *vidhyāśālās* was of a high order. Although not equal to the gurukulās of the ancient rishis, we learn that in these later schools the teacher-student relationship was based on high ideals. Learned teachers of good character and conduct taught students who were interested in learning, were humble and devoted to their teachers.

If there were a number of men who had mastery over a *śāsthrā* or an art in some corner of the country, students from a thousand or two thousand miles away sought them out at a time when there were no quick transport or fast communication. They left their homes, friends and relatives and traveled far to learn at the *vidhyāsālā* there.

Kānchi As A Centre of Education

Of the *vidhyāśālās* all over the country connected with the *Vēdhic* dharma I will speak in particular about those in the *Kānchi* region. *Kānchīpuram* has always been a centre of study of various *śāsthrās* and the philosophies of different religions. The great saint Appar Swāmin described *Kānchi* the great city of *Kānchi* with limitless education - a vast lake of education without bounds. There are some great men, *jnānins*, who have realized *Īśwarā* and who have the power to bless others, but they may not be educated in the formal sense. They may even believe that a high level of education or erudition is not necessary. In recent times. Sri *Ramakrishṅa Paramahamsā* was one such. There are other great men who must have, so to speak, 'reached the other shore of education' (that is they are highly learned). *Sri Ramakrishṅā's* first disciple *Vivēkānandā* was one such. Appar Swāmin was also like this. When he was a *Jainā*, with the name of *Dharmasēnā*, he studied at the *Jainā* school of *Tiruppadhiripuliyūr* and became fully conversant with the *Jainā* system of thought. He was the humblest of the humble and in his *Thēvāram* verses (Tamil śaiva hymns) we see his profound knowledge of all *śāsthrās* including the

Upanishads. It is particularly significant for such a person to praise *Kānchi* a great centre of education.

Kānchīpuram is associated with the sarvajna-*pītā* ('seat of knowledge'). Only that seat is called 'sarvajna-*pītā*' which is ascended by men who answer questions put by scholars in all the *śāsthrās*. We read in books that the *pītā* would have four doors and many steps leading up to the seat, that on each step there would be an image that would put a question (to the man going up the steps) and declare.' Only if you answer this question may you ascend the next step.' Whatever it be, it is certain that only those who answered questions asked by great scholars well versed in many *śāsthrās* could occupy the *pītā*. Our *Āchāryā* ascended the sarvajna-*pītā* in this way.

We know as a fact of history that, apart from men learned in Hinduism, there were erudite Buddhists and *Jainās* in *Kānchīpuram*. Learned Buddhists like *Dingñagā* and *Dharmapālā* belonged to *Kānchi*. *Mañimēkalai* was initiated into Buddhism here by *Aravañavadigal̤*. A section of *Kānchi* called Thirupparuthikunram was a big *Jainā* centre. Cruel ways of worship, not based on any religious work or philosophical concept, nor related to the *Vēdhās*, like *Kāpālikā* and *Kālāmukha* tried to take root in the *Kānchi* area. *Āchāryā* made the eight *Kāl̤is* here benign and installed the Srīchakra before Ambā *Kāmākshi*. The point is that *Kānchi* was a place where discussions were held not only by learned men belonging to the various Hindu *siddhānthās* but also by Buddhists and *Jaināś*.

'My Research' Regarding Ghatikās :

You must have heard the term '*ghatikāsthāna*'. I must say with regret that knowledge about our ancient *śāsthrās*, our ancient system of education and the establishments created for them is precious little. When I inquired about *ghatikāsthāna* with people who I thought should know, I received no information. While many *ghatikāsthānās* had existed in *Tamil Nādu*, these people said: '*Vidhyāsālās* called *ghatikāsthānās* have existed only in the Godavari valley.

The name '*ghatikāsthāna*' denotes an educational institution in which the *Vēdhās* and *sāsthrās* were taught along with the arts and sciences of the time. Perhaps in later times the name applied also to schools which had nothing to do with *Vēdhic* learning. In Tamil they say '*ghatikā*' for short.

I spoke to you about the existence of many educational institutions which were not exactly gurukulās but which had many teachers giving instruction to a large number of students not only in the *Vēdhās* but also in secular subjects. A little research has shown that these institutions were called *ghatikāsthānās*. The educational institutions in *Kānchi* were such *ghatikāsthānās*.

The next step in my research was to find out through a study of history, literature and epigraphy where these *ghatikās* had existed. I did a lot of research. I will speak about it later.

Why The Name 'Ghatikā'

What aroused my curiosity particularly was the name '*ghatikā*' One meaning of '*ghatikā*' is 'a small pot'. '*Ghatā*' means a 'big pot' '*Ghatikā*' means a pot smaller than a ghatā. Another meaning of the word is a unit of time (nāzhikai in Tamil which is 24 minutes).

The Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras, has printed many works from Palm-leaf manuscripts. Recently I was reading its publication., *Ābhōgam*. It I have to speak about this book I must tell you about several earlier books which are Adhvaithic *sāsthrās*.

Vyāsa composed the Brahmasūthrā and *Āchāryā* wrote a commentary on it. Vāchaspathi Misra wrote an explanatory commentary on this commentary - he called it Bhāmathi after his wife. As a commentary on Bhāmathi, *Amalānandā* wrote the Kalpatāru. Now *Ābhōgā* is a commentary by *Lakshminrsimha* on the Kalpatāru. After reading *Ābhōgā*, I had to refer to Kalpatāru. In one passage in it there was a mention of '*ghatikāsthāna*.'

The reference was in the explanation to the 24th sūthrā, fourth pādha, third chapter of Brahmasūthrā. It is the passage in which the sūthrakārā or author, *Vyāsa*, expresses the opinion that there is such a thing as *sanyāsa āśrama*. Jaimini in his *Pūrvamīmāmsā* contends that a man attains *Mōkshā* directly by performing *Vēdhic karmā* as a gruhastha and that there should be no sanyāsa in which *Vēdhic karmā* is eschewed. *Vyāsa* rebuts this view and establishes that there is a thuriya or fourth *āśrama* (that is sanyāsa).

The qualifications of a sanyāsin are given by *Amalānandā* in his Kalpatāru. The sanyāsin must have a shaven head. He must also cut off his sacred thread - that is the general practice. However, according to some, a sanyāsin may, keep his *śikhā* and sacred thread. That is the custom among followers of the *Rāmānuja siddhānthā* (*Viśishtādhvaitha*). The author of the Kalpatāru gives his opinion as to which is the right view.

'Yē thu śikhā-yajnōpavītha thyāga-rūpa-
pāramahamsya-vriththim na manyanthē
thē na paśsyanthi prathyaksha ghatikāsthānēshu
patyamān Atharvanīm
Śruthim - saśikhām vapanam kruthva bahis-
sūthrām thyajēth budhah'

"They say that the man who goes to the highest level among sanyāsins, the Paramahamsa state need not shave his head and cut off his sacred thread. Those who speak thus do not seem to have heard the words of the Atharva *Vēdhā* spoken by those who study the *Vēdhās* in the *ghatikāsthāna* ' 'The wise man who takes to sanyāsa must remove his *sikhā* and discard his sacred thread.''

Another important matter we learn from this is that in the period under reference the study of the Atharva *Vēdhā* had not been totally discontinued - that the fourth *Vēdhā* was also taught. In this passage the term '*ghatikāsthāna,*' is mentioned. The reference to students studying the *Vēdhās* in the *ghatikāsthāna* is contained in an ancient Advaitic text - so it means that the *ghatikāsthānās* were highly respected by learned people.

We learn from what *Amalānandā* says in the concluding part of his Kalpatāru that he was a contemporary of *Krishnā* and *Mahādēvā* of the Yadava dynasty of *Dēvagiri*, c mid-13th century. (It means 100 or 150 years after *Rāmānuja*). I looked for authoritative reference to *ghatikāsthānās* before and after this date. My research led me to 1,000 years before the time of *Amalānandā*.

The Antiquity of Ghatikās

In the beginning of the 4th century A.D. a certain king studied under a guru in a *ghatikāsthāna*. He belonged to the Shimōgā region of Karnataka. And the *ghatikāsthāna* where he studied was in *Kānchīpuram*! The fame of *Kānchi* as a centre of learning was so great that a king came there from several hundred miles away to study there. Since his guru also went with him to study there, it means that the *sāsthrās* were taught in depth in this *ghatikāsthāna*.

Our people have traveled 1,000 or 1,500 miles seeking knowledge and enlightenment during times when there was no fast transport. They have traveled from *Kānchi* to *Kāsi* and *Pātaliputrā* and so on. I spoke to you about Patanjali having taught at Chidambaram. A disciple had come from Gaudadēsa (Bengal) to learn from him. He was called Gauda. *Āchāryā was his sishyā's* *śishyā*. When *Āchāryā* was teaching *Vēdhānthā* in *Kāśi* a student called *Sanandhana* came from the *Chōḻā* country to learn from him; *Sanandhana* came to be called Padmapada. The king who went to *Kānchi* from *Shimōgā* was *Mayūravarmā*. His guru was *Vīra sarma*.

('Sarman' denotes a Brahmin, 'Varma' a Kshathriya, 'Gupta' a *Vaiśyā*, and *'Dāsa'* a *śūdra*.)

Mayūravarmā and *Vīrasarma*, went to *Kānchi* to learn all *śāsthrās* ('pravachanam nikhilam'), so says the epigraph or *śāsanā* of *Kākuthsavarmā* who ruled two regnal periods after *Mayūravarmā*. This inscription is on the pillar of the Sri *Prañavēśvaraswāmi* temple in Talagunta in *Shimōgā* district. The text of the inscription is printed in the Epigraphica Indica, Vol. VIII.

'yah prayāya Pallavēndrapurīm'

Referring to *Kānchi* as *Pallavēndrapuri* the inscription says that the king joined the *ghatikā ('ghatikam vivēśa'.)*

The king or the prince, after having completed his education under his guru, came with his teacher to *Kānchīpuram* to learn the *śāsthrās* in their entirety. From the fact that people came to study at the *ghatikā* in *Kānchi* we learn that the Tamil region too had great centres of learning like the universities of *Nālandā* and *Thakshaśila*.

During the time of *Mayūravarmā*, that is in the 4th century A.D., the Pallava king Skandaśishyā was ruling from *Kānchīpuram*. We learn from another epigraph - that of Vijaya *Nandivarmān-III* - at *Vēlūrpālayam* that *Skandaśishyā* won a *ghatikā* after defeating another king called *Sathyasēña*. *Vēlūrpālayam* is seven miles north-west of Arakonam (near *Kānchīpuram*). This epigraph is printed in South Indian Inscriptions, Vol. II. Part - V.

'Skandaśishyasthathō abhavath-Dvijānam ghatikām
rājnah Sathyasēṅath jahāra yah'

'*Dvijānam ghatikām*' means the '*ghatikā* of Brahmins'. It is clear from this that the *ghatikā* was concerned with *Vēdhic* learning. And from the Kalpatāru we gather that the Atharva *Vēdhā*, which is not learned now, was studied in the *ghatikā*. Since the acquisition of the *ghatikā* from a rival king is specially mentioned, it means it must have been a large establishment, similar to a university.

It is likely that, apart from *Vēdha-vidhyā*, other subjects studied by the castes that have the right to learn the *Vēdhās* - Brahmins, *Kshathriyās* and *Vaiśyās* - were taught in the *ghatikās*. It is a surmise that Skandaśishyā captured the *ghatikā* from *Sathyasēṅa* because the *ghatikā*, where the art of warfare (Dhanur Vēdhā) was taught, turned out warriors for the future. Or it may be that the raja in question captured the *ghatikā* from another ruler for the simple reason that it was a citadel of knowledge.

The word 'dvija' means 'twice-born'. All the first three varṅas, by virtue of the *upanayanā samskāra* are regarded as born a second time and are 'dvijās'. So, in the *ghatikās* said to belong to *'dvijās'*, Kshathriyas must have also studied. *Mayūravarmā* was a Kshathriya.

Sathyasēṅa from whom *Skandaśishyā* captured the *ghatikā* must have been one of the *Sathyapuththa* ('puththa' is from 'puthra') kings mentioned in the *Aśōkan* edicts. I have done some research to arrive at the conclusion that these *Sathyaputhrās* were rulers of *Thondaimandalām*.

From another *Vēlūrpālayam* inscription we learn that *Narasimhavarmā*, apart from building the *Kailāsanātha* temple in *Kānchīpuram*, rebuilt a *ghatikāsthāna* for Brahmins (here the word '*Dvijānam*' occurs). 'Punar *Vyāthāth*' (built again): it means that long before the time of *Narasimhavarmā* there was a *ghatikā* and that it had gone into disrepair. Realising its importance *Narasimhavarmā* must have rebuilt it. The inscription is in beautiful verse form:

Thathputhrasūnah Narasimhavarmā
Punarvyathāth yō ghatikām dvijānam
Šilāmayam vēšma Šašankamauḷēh
Kailāsakalpam cha Mahēndrakalpam

Stone Temples

Šilāmayam vēšma' suggests a house made of granite. Since a temple means today a structure of stone kept upon stone, why should this be specially mentioned? There is a reason for this. In the beginning of the 7th century, before the time of *Mahēndravarmā* Pallavan, temples were built of bricks, wood, etc. It was *Mahēndravarmā* who built the first stone temple. Instead of 'built' we must say he produced. Even in his time the practice of cutting stone from the mountains and making slabs for the construction of temples had not started. Temples were cut out of huge rocks. This was the first development from the early temples of bricks and wood. The second development took place 100 years after *Mahēndravarmā*, during the time of *Narasimhavarmā* II (*Rājasimha Pallava*). He got big rocks broken into slaps and built temples by placing stone upon stone. The first such temple was the *Kailāsanātha* temple of *Kānchīpuram*. The reference in '*Šilāmayam vēšma*' is to this temple.

When a temple was carred out of a rock it meant going in search of the rock, of the Lord. Now the rock was made to come in search of us and it was broken down and its pieces put together like a structure of bricks, The *Kailāsanātha* temple is the first to be built with stones in which the Lord came to have his abode among us.

This temple, built as Kailasa on earth, is mentioned as 'Kailasa-kalpa'. It is referred to briefly as '*Mahēndrakalpah*' to denote that it was built by *Narasimhavarmā*, using *Mahēndravarmā's* method of construction.

Mahēndravarmā, who was brought back to the *Vēdhic* religion from Jainism by Appar Swāmin, built cave temples in *Māmańdūr*, *Pallāvaram* (Pallavapuram), and below the Malaikottai (Rock Fort) temple in *Tiruchirāpalli*. He lived in the early 7th century A.D. His son was also a *Narasimhavarmā*. He was the '*Māmalla*' who went as a conqueror up to *Vāthāpi*. But it was not he who built the *Kailāsanātha* temple. That was built by *Narasimhavarmā -I*. The ruler who was called '*Māmalla*: was his great-grandson, *Narasimhavarmā* II. In order not to confuse him with his great-grandfather, *Narasimhavarmā I*, he is referred to by his regnal name of *Rājasimha*. Since he came in the famous line of *Mahēndravarmā* and built temples, he referred to his own construction as '*Mahēndrakalpah.*'

'*Śaśankamauli*' is *Paramēśwarā* who is also known as '*Chandraśēkhara*' '*Silāmayam vēśma Saśankamaulēh*' - the 'sa-kara alliteration is pleasing to the ear.

The temple and the *ghatikā*

The *ghatikā* was for the study of the *Vēdhās* - and the temple was for the worship of *Dēvā* (*'Dēvāradhańa'*). That *Narasimhavarmā* built both is quite appropriate. The living presence of divinity in a temple is ensured by the *prāńa*-prathisha carried out with *Vēdhic manthrās*, *kumbhābhishēkam* and Pūjā. The temple is the fruit of the tree of *Sanāthana* dharma which has Vēdhās for the roots. The 'fruit', that is the 'temple', is to be 'enjoyed' by all. The 'cause' of this fruit is hidden as roots in the form of the *Vēdhās* (The Tamil word for Vēdhā is 'Marai' which means hidden).

It was in the line of kings like the *Narasimhavarmā* that, after the rajas had gone into decline, the Chettiārs and Pil͟lais (also *Nagarathārs)* came to foster our religion. They kept up the tradition of renovating temples and creating *pātaśālās*. When a temple was renovated, they also established a *pātaśālā* along with it.

Temples were built by our forefathers to take us to the feet of *Īśwarā* as a fruit of studying in a *pātaśālā*.

In the passage on education in Tirukural̲, *Tiruval̲l̲uvar* gives the name of 'Vālarivan' for *Īśwarā*. It is indeed a word pregnant with meaning. 'Vālarivan' is one who knows everything (omniscient). However much one may be learned or educated, one should not be conceited about it. But should feel humble because one's knowledge is nothing but a drop compared to the (ocean of) omniscience of the Lord and he must worship the Lord's fest.

In the eighth century

Another stone inscription relating to a *ghatikāsthāna* belongs to the 8th century. It shows that the *ghatikā* was a prosperous institution. (South Indian Inscriptions, Vol. IV). This inscription is to be found in the Vaikuntha *Perumāl̲* temple, *Kānchīpuram*.

Once the main branch of the Pallavā dynasty did not have an heir the result was anarchy in *Kānchīpuram*. There was then in another branch of the dynasty a ruler of minor importance called Hirañyavarmā. The leading citizens of *Kānchīpuram* went in a delegation to him and appealed to him to send his son *Paramēśwaravarmā* to be crowned king in *Kānchīpuram*. *Hirañyavarmā* agreed. Soon after, *Vēdhic* savants conducted the coronation ceremony of *Paramēśwaravarmā* and gave him the title of *Nandivarma Pallavā*. While mentioning this, the inscription referred to above adds that there were teachers from the *ghatikā* not only on the 'delegation' of the *Kānchīpuram* citizens to

Hiranyavarmā but also among the Brahmins who conducted the coronation ceremony. Here is proof of the high place accorded to the *ghatikāsthāna* and the esteem in which its teachers were held.

The *Chālukyās* who ruled from *Vāthāpi* (Badami) had the titles of '*Vikramādityā*' and '*Sathyāsraya*'. They and the *Pallavās* were frequently at war - victory and defeat more or less alternated. On one of the pillars of the *Kailāsanātha* temple of *Kānchi* (this is west of the *Mahāmandapa*), there is an inscription mentioning the charities of one of these *Chālukyā* rulers, *Vikramādityā Sathyāsraya*. It respectfully describes the inmates of the *ghatikā* in *Kānchi* as '*mahājanā*' and warns in Sanskrit that 'whoever does harm to this dharma would incur the sin of killing the *mahājanā* of the *ghatikā*.

Format of Ṡāṡanā :

A royal edict has generally three parts. In the first part is the 'praṡasthi' or words of praise. In this prasasti the raja who made a particular donation, with the assurance of its being made permanent and his ancestors are praised. It is the second part of the inscription that gives the details of the charity - to whom it was made, the date on which it was made, and the nature of the charity, etc. The concluding part has '*Vyāsa Gītā*' verses. For the proper execution of the endowment made, the *'dharmakarthās'* (those in charge of religious and charitable work in temples and other places) are exhorted to execute it honestly. Thereby they would earn merit (as described in the inscription). By not executing the endowment properly and honestly they would incur sins as listed. Usuallly, mention is made of 'the sin of killing a black cow on the banks of the Gangā'. This is the worst of sins. Mentioned instead of this in the above inscription is : 'incurring the sin of killing the *ghatikā-mahājanā*'. Hence it follows that killing the *mahājanā* in the *ghatikā* was considered as great a sin as killing a black cow on the banks of the Gangā.

Seven Thousand Students

From another stone inscription we have information of a big *ghatikā* which was almost like an entire village. This indeed arouses wonder. Seven thousand students studied in this *ghatikā*. The inscription pertaining to this is on a rock in the river Nīvā flowing past the village Tiruvallam near Gudiyāththam in North Arcot district. It has been found to belong to the first half of the 8th century. The inscription is published in South Indian Inscriptions, Vol.I Part 1. Most stone inscriptions relate to charities, endowments, etc., and this too, after speaking about a charitable act, warns: 'Whoever does damage to this 'dharma' will earn the sin of killing all of 7,000 inmates in the *ghatikā*.'

The '*Kāśākudi*' copper-plate inscriptions of *Nandivarma* Pallavā are famous. In part II, Vol.II, of the book of inscription I referred to earlier, we learn how the kings of those times built *ghatikās* with great respect for, and affirmation of faith in, Brahmins (they are called *Bhūdēvās* - Gods of earth). The kings were called *Kshathrachūdāmani* - *Kshathriyās* who were like crest-jewels of their caste. Even though the *āchāryās* of the *ghatikāsthāna* did not conduct any gurukula they merited being called '*Dēva-dvijās*' since they were conversant with all the four *Vēdhās* and excelled in the performance of rites according to dharma.

Similar to the *ghatikā* of 7,000 students, we also come to know about *ghatikās* with 3,000 and 1,000 inmates. There is a village called *Brahmadēyam* in the taluq of *Cheyārū* of North Arcot. The very word '*Brahmadeyam*' means that which has been offered to Brahmins. There is a temple of *Chandramouḻīśwarā* in this village. In a niche in one of the walls of the sanctum sanctorum is an inscription mentioning '*thrairājya ghatikāmadhyastha mūvāyirar*'. The mention of '*mūvāyiram*' (three thousand in

Tamil) shows that 3,000 students studied in the *ghatikā* in a continuous stream and this drew the attention and respect of all people. In another Tamil inscription is mentioned '*ghatikā ēzhāyiram*' (*ghatikā* of seven thousand). In a certain place, a *ghatikā* in which a thousand students studied is referred to as '*ghatikā*-sahasram.'

Some people opine that 7,000, 3,000 etc., are exaggerated figures. Even if we concede and make an allowance for it, is it not reasonable to think that there should have been at least half the number of students in each of the *ghatikās* mentioned? Is it not remarkable also that more than 1,000 students studied *Vēdhā-śāsthrās* at the same place?

In Andhra and Karnataka

Although it was in *Kānchīpuram* that *ghatikās* were supported most - and it was there that they reached the heights of excellence - we know that even during the sixth century kings of the Telugu country had established *ghatikās* in the Godavari valley. When excavating a pond there in the *Śikkulla agrahāra*, Tuni taluq, a copper-plate was discovered. It belongs to *Vikramēndravarmā II* of the *Vishnukuṅdina* dynasty. The inscription states that he established a *ghatikā* 'in a proper manner and earned a 'heap' of merit' *(Yathavidhi vinirmapita ghatikāvāpta pūnyasanchayasya)*.

In Karnataka we find inscriptions of the 12th century which speak of the existence of *ghatikās*. This will be seen from the Epigraphca Karnataka.

In the Hēmavati Doddappa temple of *Kāmakontanahalli* in Tumkur district there is an inscription of Tribhuvana *Mallidēva Chōlā* Maharaja who ruled in the latter half of the 12th century. It speaks about a *ghatikāsthāna* in *Henchārapattanam* and the gifting away of a village in the sannidhi of Noṅambēsvaraswāmi there. The inscription says in Kannada: *'Srimadu Henchārapattanatha Mahāghatikāsthāna Sri Noñambēśvara dēvara sannidhānadalli...'*

In Mandayam region of Karnataka, in Halegere, an edict has been discovered of Sivamaraman, ruler of the Prthvi Konkani dynasty. It mentions a gift of land and gives the name of the donee as Madhava Sarman, belonging to the *Haridasa gōthra*. He is lauded as 'one of a thousand belonging to a *ghatikā*' *(Ghatikā - sahasrāya Haridasa gōthraya Mādhava sarmānē). Epigraphica Karnataka, Mandya taluq Vol.III, page 108.*

There is a stone inscription of *Chennarāyapattana* belonging to 1442. In our history of *ghatikās* we have come to the middle of the 15th century, that is 1,100 years from early 4th century A.D. when *Mayūravarmā* came from Karnataka to study at the *ghatikā* of *Kānchīpuram*. Now many *ghatikās* had appeared in Karnataka itself. Among them was one belonging to the period of this inscription and established in the month of *Bhādrapada* in the Dundabhi year. It refers to the institution with respect and devotion as *'ghatikāśrama'* instead of '*ghatikāsthāna*'. We infer from this that, just as an individual guru had conducted a gurukula, here (in this *ghatikā*) a number of *āchāryās* gave instruction to hundreds of students with the place remaining as sacred as an *āśrama*.

In the Chōḻā land

The *Chōḻā* kingdom was well known for *Vēdhā-śāsthrās* and education, but the *pātaśālās* there were not known to have been called *ghatikās*. Even so we know that in Vēppattur (Vēmpattur) in *Thanjāvūr* district there was a school in which great scholars taught and it was called a *ghatikā*. We discover this from the inscription of *Rājēndra Chōḻā* II in the sanctum sanctorum of the *Vēdapurīśwara* temple in Tirukkazhiththittai. This is the southern boundary of the region where *ghatikās* were to be found.

In Maharastra

When I started speaking about *ghatikās* I mentioned *Amalānandā*. He lived in *Dēva*giri now called Daulatabad in Maharashtra. Since he mentions *ghatikās* it is reasonable to presume that there were universities called *ghatikās* also in the region where he lived. Or during his period, mid - 13th century, the fame of the *ghatikās* of *Kānchi* must have been such as to have reached his ears. Students from all over the country and belonging to various traditions must have come to study at this *ghatikā* and, considering its reputation, he asks in surprise. 'Does not so and so know about the students of the Atharva *Vēdhā* chanting the manthra that speaks about sanyāsa?'

'Ghatikā' and gadikāram (a clock, watch)

We know how *ghatikās* were famous. But how is the name *ghatikā* derived? Everyone perhaps knows that '*ghatā*' means a 'pot'. A *ghatikā* is a small pot. We have, for instance, pairs, 'lata-latika', 'patra-patrika', and '*ghatā-ghatikā*' in the same manner. The second word in each of these pairs is the diminutive form of the first. But what is the connection between 'pot' and 'school'

I said '*ghatikā*' also means 'nāzhikai' (a Tamil word meaning a unit of time which is 24 minutes). It is in this sense that the term 'amrutha-ghatikai' is used. Since time was measured by the water trickling from a pot, the unit of time called 'nāzhikai' was named '*ghatikā*' after ghatā. You find the idea in *'ghadikāra'* (time-piece,' 'watch', 'clock').

'All right, but why should an educational institution which resembled a college be called a '*ghatikā*'?

Ghatikāchalam

There is a place called *Shōlingar* which was called *Chōlāsimhapuram* in the old days. (It is also known as *Chōlālingapuram*). Another name for it is *Ghatikāchalam*, meaning

'*Ghatikā* Mountain'. I inquired of people there about the significance of the word '*ghatikā*'. They said that by staying on this mountain for just one *ghatikā* - that is one nazhikai - all evil, including trouble caused by malignant spirits, would vanish with the power and grace of the deity here, that is *Narasimhamūrthi*. Hence the name '*Ghatikāchalam*'. This was of no help to my research.

I sought an explanation for the word '*ghatikā*' occurring in the name of the Tamil book, *Nānmaṅikkatikai*. I came to understand that '*ghatikā*' meant a 'small piece' and that in this work four pieces of *upadēśa*, four gems were strung together in each verse - hence the name *Nānmaṅikkatikai*. From this also I could not make out how the term '*ghatikā*' was applied to an educational institution.

Rewarded at last

I made further inquiries about the word '*ghatikā*'. I questioned learned people about it - but all in vain. However, my eagerness to know the meaning of the word as applied to an educational institution became only keener. And, at last, my inquiries yielded fruit.

Just as I found a reference to '*ghatikā*' in the Kalpatāru which is considered a *Uththaramīmāmsa-śāsthrā*, I found an explanation for the word in a *Pūrvamīmāmsā* work. Happily, information relating to our education was obtained from Mīmāmsā which is one of the *chathurdaśa-vidhyā*-s (fourteen branches of learning)

In Prayaga, in the 5th century B.C

A leading exponent of *Pūrvamīmāmsā*, *Kumārilabhattā*, has written a commentary called Thantravārththika. In its 'Kalpasūthrādhikaraṅa' is a verse (the subject of the verse is not relevant here) containing the phrase *'ghatikā-mārgavrithishu'* and this is what is important to us.

I spoke about the existence of *ghatikās* from the 4th century A.D. up to 1,000 years thereafter and I pointed out, with pride, evidence for it in the form of royal inscriptions. Now we see that there were *ghatikās* in the 5th century B.C., about a thousand years prior to the 4th century A.D. Evidence for this is some thing better than royal inscriptions, the word of a contemporary of our *Āchāryā*, the *sāsthric* pronouncement of *Kumārilabhattā*.

That is to say the educational institutions called '*ghatikās*' flourished for more than 2,000 years. If *Āchāryā* introduced institutionalism in the Hindu religion, the education connected with that religion was also institutionalised during his time in the form of *ghatikās*. When the Buddhists began to wield some influence among the intellectuals, the *Thārkikās* and the Mīmāmsākas opposed them. It appears that the *ghatikās* must have been established by bringing together scholars steeped in the *Vēdha-vidhyā*. What was started then expanded over the centuries.

Apart from confirming the very early existence of the *ghatikās* we learn from *Kumārilabhattā's* reference to them how these institutions were found in regions extending from the *Gangā* in the North to the land of the *Chōḻās* in the South. *Kumārila* then lived at Prayaga which centuries later came to be called Allahabad. Since he mentions what educationists were familiar with ('*ghatikā*-mārga-vruthishu') it means that the educational institution called *ghatikāsthāna* was known from Allahabad in the North to Veppattur (*Chōḻā* territory) in the South.

Light On Name

We discover the reason behind the name '*ghatikā*' from the commentary of *Bhattā Sōmēswarā* on '*Kumārilabhattā's*

Thanthravārththika. Bhattā Sōmēśwarā explains '*ghatikāsthāna*' thus:

Vēdakauśala-jijnāsartham thāththath-
Vēdhā-bhāga-chin ha-lēkh-
yāni ghatikāyam kumbhākhyāyām nikshipya,
thāththath-Vēdhā-bhāga-
parīkshā-kalē thanyākrishya, ākrushta
lēkhya-chinhitham
Vēdham pata ithyadhyētharah anuyujyanthē
ithi ghatikā-mārgē-Varthinō anu yōgah.'

The words, 'anuyōgeshu *ghatikā*-mārga-vruththishu', appears in a verse in *Kumārilabhattā's* Thantravārththika. The commentator (*Bhattā Sōmēśwarā*) describes what it means (or mentions what it refers to) and concludes by mentioning the words of the original sentence: *'ghatikā-mārga-varthinō anuyōgah.'*

'*Ghatikā*-mārga-vruththi' means the 'way of teaching as imparted in the *ghatikā*'. Those who follow it are '*ghatikā*-mārgā-varthis'. *'Anuyōga'* refers to the conducting of inquiries, or examinations.

From *Sōmēśwarā's* account of how examinations were conducted at the *ghatikāsthānā* we understand the reason behind the name '*ghatikā*' *'Ghatikāyām kumbhākhyāyām'*: '*Kumbhā*' means a pot, the name '*ghatikā*' is connected with the pot. *Sōmēśwarā* explains that the name '*ghatikā*' is derived from the fact that examinations were conducted by using pots in the schools called '*ghatikās.*'

To find out whether a student's adhyayana is thorough he must be able to chant any manthra he is asked to chant. The purpose of an examination is to test this.

I will explain to you through a concrete example, how this test was conducted.

Suppose we want to find out whether the student being examined knows a particular manthra in the Rig Vēdhā. He must chant it without a clue being given to its first word. Since adhyayana implies memorising, if the first word is given, the student, in all likelihood, will be able to chant the entire manthra.

So he was given a mere indication, a number, for instance and asked to chant the manthra the examiner had in mind.

How was this number given?

There are more than 10,000 *manthrās* in the Rig Vēdhā. To number them from 1 to 10,000 would be difficult. Fortunately, the *Vēdhā* has been arranged into a number of divisions, each division having a number of sections, and each section having a number of *sūkthās* further divided into a certain number of riks. A rik is a manthra and is like a *slōkā* or verse.

In the division mentioned above there are two types. There are ten *mandalās* and each *mandalā* is divided into '*anuvākās*' and each *anuvākā* is divided into '*sūkthās*'. This is one type. In the second type, there are eight 'ashtakas' and each ashtaka has sub-divisions called '*adhyāyās*', each *adhyāyā* being further divided into *sūkthās*.

Now it is easy to test a student by giving him a clue in the form of a number (or numbers). Suppose an examiner gave the number 2 - 4 - 3 - 5. If the *ghatikā* in question followed the *mandalā* division, the student had to chant the fifth rik in the third *sūktha* of the fourth *anuvākā* in the second *mandalā*. If the ashtaka division was followed, the student had to chant the fifth rik in the third *sūktha* in the fourth *adhyāyā* of the second ashtaka.

What is the connection between this and the *ghatā* or pot?

Instead of the examiner giving the number orally it would be clearer to the student if he wrote them down. So clues in the form of numbers were inscribed on bits of palm-leaf and kept in a pot. These bits of palm-leaf could be used again and again unlike the numbers orally given. They would, in addition, constitute documentary evidence in case any dispute arose with regard to the test.

During the examination the student had to take out a chit from the pot and chant the rik mentioned on it. Apart from single riks, the student was tested in the same manner with regard to *sūkthās* and *Panchāthi* (the latter in the case of the Yajur *Vēdhā*).

The practice was followed in the election to the local administration in *Tamil Nādu.* It was called '*kudavōlai*' election. An innocent child was asked to take out a chit from a number of chits in a pot. In the *gatakā* examination the student himself must have taken out the chit or perhaps the teacher, or some intermediary. Instead of appointing the teacher himself the examiner, a third man was probably asked to take out the chit as the examiner.

The test was conducted in such a way that no doubt could arise about its propriety. Whether the examiner was the teacher himself or an outsider there was no room for the sort of malpractices we witness today like, for instance, the examinees being told the questions beforehand. The questions were in the form of numbers written or inscribed on chits kept in the pot and the student had to answer according to the numbers which he got as a matter of chance. There was thus no likelihood of any doubt arising with regard to the proper conduct of the examination.

From the explanation given by *Bhattā Sōmēswarā* we learn that it was from the *ghatā* used in examining students that the *vidhyāsālā* concerned was called *ghatikā*. In discovering the meaning of the name '*ghatikā*' there is the joy of finding a treasure!

A Little bit of Sanskrit

Since I have spoken at length about the subject of teaching I will teach you a little bit of Sanskrit by way of explaining the meaning of the passage quoted earlier from *Bhattā Sōmēśvara*.

'Vēdhakauśala-jijnāsārtham' - to find out how much proficiency (a candidate) possesses in the *Vēdhās*: '*thāththath-Vēdhabhāga*' - in those parts of the *Vēdhās* (that the students have studied); '*chinahalēkhyānī*' - chits containing clues or indications; *'ghatikāyam kumbhākhyāyam'* - in pots that are called *ghatikās*, '*nikshipya*' - after being kept (or put in them); '*thāththath Vēdhabhāga -parīkshākālē*' - when the examination in that part of the *Vēdhā* is being conducted: '*thāni ākrushya*' - after removing or taking them (that is the slips); '*ākrushtalēkhya-chinhitham*' - according to the clue contained (in the slip); *'Vēdham pata ithi'* - chant the *Vēdhā*, *'adhyēthārah'* - *adhyāpakās; 'anuyujyathē'* - conduct (the examination).

Appropriateness of the Pot

How fitting was the idea of involving the *kumbhā* or pot in *Vēdhic* education. As stated earlier, the *Vēdha dharma* is a great tree. Its study, *Vēdhādhyayana*, constitutes its roots. What is the ultimate 'phala' of this tree 'Phala' means 'fruit'. The temple is the fruit of fulfilment of the *Vēdha dharma*. The *gōpurams*, the *vimanās*, the images are imbued with the *Vēdhic* mntras and made to radiate for the well-being of the world. It is the *kumbhā* that transmits the power of the *manthrās*. The temple is made a temple by anoinments of the gopuram, *vimanā*, *kalaśas* (they too are *kumbhās*) and the divine idols with the sacred water (water imbued with the power of the *manthrās*) contained in the *kumbhā*. Such is the nature of the *kumbhābhishēka* ceremony. The *kumbhā* that is part of the fruit of the *Vēdhās* (the temple) becomes the *ghatā* at the time of the examination conducted in the *vidhyāsālā*.

There was immense happiness in learning that the name '*ghatikāsthāna*' was derived this way. There was also satisfaction in having succeeded in the research.

Vēdhic Schools In Tamil Region

Through this research we were able to find out that, like the big educational institutions called *ghatikās* in *Thondaimandalām*, there were large *Vēdha pātaśālās* in other parts of the Tamil country also. But these latter were not known by the name of *ghatikās*.

We are now of the view that learning did not flourish to the same extent in the South Ārcot, North Ārcot, and Chengalpattu areas as it did in the *Chōḻā*, Pāndya and Thondai areas. This view will be proved wrong if we study the inscriptions found in these areas. There were big *vidhyāśālās* in these parts but they were not called *ghatikāsthānās*. In *Bāhūr*, which is between cuddalore and Pondicherry, five copper-plate inscriptions have been discovered. According to them there was a large *vidhyāsālā* in *Bāhūr* which taught the *chathurdaśa-vidhyā*-s each *vidhyā* having a separate department. The inscription also mentions that, in the latter half of the ninth century, a minister of king *Vijayanrupathunga* had donated three villages for its maintenance.

There is a *Varadarāja Perumāḻ* temple in Tribhuvanam (also called Tribhuvani) near *Bāhur* (not to be confused with the Tribhuvanam of *Thanjāvūr* district). On the eastern, western and northern walls of this temple there are inscriptions, dated 1048, belonging to the time of *Rājādhirāja*. We learn from these inscriptions that there was a fairly big *vidhyāsālā* in Tribhuvanam which had 190 students and 12 teachers. Sixty students learned the Rig Vēdhā, 60 the Yajur *Vēdhā*, 20 the *Sāma Vēdhā* and the remaining 50 the *śāsthrās*. Of them 70 specialised in *Vēdhānthā* and the rare text of grammar called *Rūpāvatāra*. Apart from these subjects the *Ramāyāna*, the *Mahābhāratā* and the *Dharma Sāsthrā* of Manu were also taught.

There is a *Vaishṇava-āgama* called *Vaikhānasa*. Among the four important temples of Sri Vaishṇavās - in Srirangam, Tirupati, *Kānchīpuram* and *Mēlkōtē* - in Tirupati alone are the rites conducted according to the *Vaikhānasa-āgama*. The remaining three follow the *Pāncharātra-āgama*. In the Tribhuvanam school *Vaikhānasa* was also one of the subjects taught.

According to the inscription, a noteworthy feature of this *pātāśālā* (of Tribhuvanam) was that both teachers and taught were bound by rule not to be engaged in activities other than teaching and learning respectively.

Eṇṇāyiram is a village between Vizhupuram and Tindivanam. It is also known by another name, *Rājarājā-Chathurvēdimangalam*; the name denotes that the village had been donated by *Rājarājā* to Brahmins well versed in the four *Vēdhās*. From an inscription of *Rājēndra Chōḻā*- I, we learn that there was a big educational institution in *Eṇṇāyiram* with 340 students and 14 teachers. The students were divided into two batches - 270 in the lower class and 70 in the higher. Of the 270 in the lower class, 75 studied the Rig Vēdhā, 75 the Yajur *Vēdhā*, 20 the *Chāndōgya śākhā* of the *Sāma Vēdhā*, 20 the Talavakara *śākhā* of the *Sāma Vēdhā*, 20 the *Sukla*-Yajur *Vēdhā* or *Vājasanēya*, 10 the Atharva *Vēdhā*, 20 the *Bōdhāyana Gruhya*-kalpa which is one of the Vēdhāngās, and 40 *Rūpāvatāra*, (We have mentioned that 75 studied the Yajur *Vēdhā* and that 20 studied the *Sukla*-Yajur *Vēdhā*. '*Krishṇā*' and '*Sukla*' are two divisions of the Yajur *Vēdhā*. The first-mentioned 75 must have studied the *Krishṇa*-Yajur *Vēdhā*. The majority of *Yajur Vēdhins* in *Tamil Nādu* belong to the '*Krishṇa*' division.)

Atharva Vēdhā

Since some centuries ago there has been hardly any following for the Atharva *Vēdhā* nor has it been studied during the same period. However, during the 11th century, 10 students studied thei *Vēdhā* in the *pātāsālā* ai *Ennayiram* in *Tamil Nādu*. When I first spoke to you about the story of *ghatikā*, I told you that students of the Atharva *Vēdhā* were mentioned in the Kalpatāru. The Atharva *Vēdhā* must have been learned at *Bāhūr* also. The basis of our religion is constituted by the fourteen *vidhyā*-s and there was a department each for these *vidhyā*-s in our schools. So the Atharva *Vēdhā* must also have been taught in them. In later times, for some reason, followers of the Atharva *Vēdhā* dwindled in numbers and almost came to nil and it ceased to be studied.

Respect for Many Sāsthrās

In the higher class of 70 at *Ennayiram*, 25 learned grammar, 35 studied the *Prabhākara siddhānthā* of *Pūrvamīmāmsā* which is slightly different from the *siddhānthā* of *Kumārilabhattā*, and 10 studied *Vēdhānthā* or *Uththaramīmāmsā*. (I am reminded of the inscription of *Āditya Karikālā* in the *Nagēsvaraswāmi* temple of *Kumbakōnam* which mentions an endowment for the study of *Prabhākarā's Mīmāmsā*).

According to another inscription in *Ennayiram* there was an endowment to feed Brahmins (scholars and others). Every day 506 Brahmins were fed.

Pazhaya Sīvaram is about 12 miles from *Kānchīpuram*. Near it, on the banks of *Pālār*, is *Tirumukkūdal* where there is a *Vaishnava* temple. According to an inscription of *Vīrarājēndra Dēva* in this temple (date 1067), a *vidhyāsālā* and a hospital were run from the income of the temple. In this school 10 students studied the Rig Vedhā, 10 the Yajur *Vēdhā*, 20 grammar, 10 the *Pāncharātra-āgamā*. You may remember that I told you of the *Pāncharātra* having a wider following than *Vaikhānasa* of the two Āgamās. It is mentioned that five *Vaikhānasa* Brahmins conducted Pūjā in a Siva temple. They were called *Sivayōgis*. There were also three saiva Brahmins in the *vidhyāsālā*.

The Vēdhās and Āgamās

A point to be noted in the foregoing is that in these inscriptions the Brahmins who studied the *Vēdhās* and *śāsthrās* and those who studied subjects connected with temple ritual - Pancaratrins and *Vaikhānasa*s - are mentioned separately. However, the differentiation is not total. In the same *vidhyāsālā* the *Vēdhās* and Āgamās were both taught. The two were promoted as branches of the same *Sanāthana* dharma.

In a stone inscription in *Pañayavaram*, near *Eññayiram*, Brahmins and *Sivayōgis* are mentioned separately as *Vaidikās* and students of Āgamās. Fifty from the former group and 10 from the latter were fed every day. (In Kēralā, during temple festivals, Brahmins are fed even today in the name of 'agram'. In those days Brahmins in *Tamil Nādu* must also have been fed - this is just my conjecture).

Harmony

We realize from various inscriptions that unity in diversity is the main feature of our religion. As pointed out before, it was under the same roof that the *Vēdhās* and Āgamās were studied. Besides, as far as the two *Vaishñava*-Āgamās are concerned - *Pāncharātra* and *Vaikhānasa* - in some *Pāncharātra* temples *Vaikhānasa* was taught. What should make us happier is the fact that in some *Vaishñava* temples the *śaiva-āgama* was also taught.

Temples and Vidhyā

I spoke to you about the education given in temples. I must explain it a bit further.

About 1,000 years ago, the rulers known as the later *Chōḻās* were a more dominant power than the Pandyas and the *Pallavās*. It was only after Vijayalaya brought about a new awakening that

Parāntakā, *Rājarājā*, *Rājēndra* and others extended the frontiers of the *Chōḻā* empire. A matter for pride is not so much how this empire expanded but as how art and culture flourished during this period. During the time of the Pallavas the temples were built on a small or medium scale and now, during the period of the *Chōḻās*, they were built on a large scale. At the same time, education, literature, music, dance, all these took great strides. A beautiful aspect of this advancement was that it was not merely a case of the building of temples going to the one side and culture growing on the other. It was with the Lord as the base, with the temple as the (sthūla) 'gross' centre, that both education and culture developed.

Now took shape the idea of establishing schools right inside the temple. The *'Vyākaraṅa-dhāna-mandapa'* found in many Śaiva temples belongs to this period. Since the temples that were built now were big there were facilities in them to conduct colleges of higher education. If you see the temples of Chidambaram, *Thanjāvūr*, and so on you will notice double-storeyed buildings inside the premises almost touching the outer walls. These were built by the *Chōḻā* kings during the 10th - 12th centuries as *'Thiruchutru-māligai'*, meaning buildings around the sacred walls. Classes were conducted inside these buildings. They also housed the equivalent of today's libraries, *'Saraswathi bhandaram'*. Manuscripts were collected and copied and kept carefully in them and they were made available to teachers and students. A 'dhana-bhandāram' (treasury) and 'dhānya-bhandāram' (godown for grain). The man in charge of the treasury was 'dhana-bhandāra'. Similarly dhānya-bhandara who was in charge of the godown for grain. (The supply in those days was not as erratic as it is today and did not give rise to frequent complaints). If there was a bhandara for education, of which the presiding deity is *Saraswathi*, what else could it be but a library? That is how we have the beautiful name *'Saraswathi-bhandāra'*.

Since these colleges were conducted inside the temples it did not mean that instruction was given only in religious subjects in them. I said that there was a mandapa exclusively for grammar. However, even secular education was not meant to be taught keeping aside *Īśwarā* and religious observances. It was to create this consciousness, that learning should not be divorced from the divine, that the colleges of general education were constructed inside the temples. There is evidence to show that subjects like Āyūr *Vēdhā* were also taught, the implication being that there must have been a medical college also.

Pride and Shame

All this shows the great achievements of our forefathers in education. In this story I have been able to do research in many matters and connecting them with one another to come to certain conclusions. By reading various books scanning inscriptions and through other means I got much information.

It is well known that big hills have been excavated in Ellora to create temples with their breath-takingly beautiful sculptures. Those who see them exclaim in wonder. 'How could such temples have been built!' It is not that visitors and devotees alone are lost in wonder. The chief architect himself, after completing his work of excavating the caves, building the temples and creating the sculptures was filled with amazement. He gave expression to his wonder in a verse which is inscribed on a stone in the *Kailāsanātha* temple. The verse says: 'I cannot believe - and I am aghast - that all this sacred work was accomplished by me. No longer will be able to build like this. I must truly have been possessed.' I am reminded of this statement now.

In my very boast (about my rediscovery of our traditions of *Vedhic* education) there is something about which I must feel small. From the 5th century B.C. to the 15th century A.D. that is for

2,000 years - institutions for *Vēdhic* learning flourished throughout the country, but as a guru of this religion (of Hindus) I did not know about them until recently. Not only that, my inquiry into the subject did not elicit any information from our learned people. It shows that we are not only ignorant about our ancient cultural traditions but also indifferent to them. Education in our national *śāsthrās* has declined to such an extent. It is a matter for shame that the *ghatikāsthānās* that flourished until the 15th century and the other *Vēdhic* schools that prospered to an equal extent (though they were not called *ghatikās*) became extinct afterwards. Indeed they had so irretrievably gone into oblivion that we did not even know the meaning of the term '*ghatikā*'.

At a time when there was no easy means of transport and communication, students from various parts of the country traveled 1,000 or 2,000 miles to learn at *vidhyāsthanās* which had a strength of 1000, or 2,000. Just think of it. These institutions flourished for as long as 2,000 years! But today when there are so many facilities and students go on foreign trips to be trained in subjects that are not essential, there is not a single *vidhyāsthānā* similar to those of the past. We should hang our heads in shame. Let 90 or 95 students out of 100 learn the modern sciences or business courses. But let at least five students out of 100 learn subjects that are truly ours like religion, grammar, logic, medicine etc. And could not such students, in addition, learn subjects like physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy and engineering and conduct research?

A 'Plan' for National Vidhyā :

The government spends thousands of crores of rupees on economic planning instead of merely talking about culture. If only it spends one-hundredth of this amount, universities could be established for our ancient *sāsthrās*. Scholarships and stipends could be given to students for the purpose and, after their graduation., grants could be given to them for research- or aid could be given and our great traditions could be natured.

But, since such *vidhyā* must be taught in accordance with the *śāsthrās* so as to derive the real benefits from it, it seems it would be better, after all, if the government did not undertake the responsibility to teach it. All political parties are committed to reformist views. That being the case, one wonders whether it is possible to do anything according to the *śāsthrās*, according to the dos and don'ts laid down by them. So, instead of expecting help from the government or criticizing it, members of the public who respect the *śāsthrās* must come forward to perform the task (that is establishing universities to promote our ancient *śāsthrās* and traditions).

The right method

The important aspect of establishing new schools for our ancient arts and *śāsthrās* is the introduction of our old method of teaching which must be different from those of other cultures. If the subject is an old *śāsthrā*, the method of teaching it must also be old. When a European or American woman comes to any of our temples or matās does she not wear a sari? Similarly, the educational institutions meant for traditional Hindu learning will be infused with life only if they are conducted in the manner suited to them. Even in a Hindu temple built in America the Naivēdhya (the offering made to the deity) is according to our custom. When there is a performance of Bharatanatyam does not the dancer wear the costume depicted in sculptures that are 1,000 years old? In the same manner, if there are schools for Hindu arts and *śāsthrās*, they must not be like the universities of today which are housed in big buildings and in which people wear European-style clothes. Our schools, as far as possible, must be run according to the traditional methods.

In ancient times, the rishis had their gurukulās in dwelling made of leaves and creepers (Parṅaśālā). Today, it is not practicable to conduct colleges in forests. In medieval times or earlier, *ghatikās* came up even in the towns. But the colleges or universities I am talking about should not be conducted right in urban centres. The *ghatikāsthānās* which functioned in the cities during the middle ages were not affected by the kind of evils that we witness today.

The gurukulās of old were in forests. There was no scope for diversion in them nor were the students exposed to the sort of temptations that would militate against the strict observance of *brahmachārya*. The sole aim as well as interest of the students was study. (It must also be mentioned that during that period there were fewer towns and a much vaster area was under forest than now).

The students were not confined to their rooms but were in tune with nature, living in the midst of streams and greenery, playing with deer, grazing cows and meditating on the Gāyathrī manthra, sitting in the open with the sky for a roof. Unlike today, when students live an artificial or 'mechanical' life, their counterparts then lived every moment of their life truly and happily. Rabindranath Tagore has extolled this kind of life led in our ancient gurukulās. He founded a forest university himself, the *Viśva-Bhārati*. Even during times when there were no *vidhyāśālās* big enough to be called universities, the rishis built their *parṅāśālās* in the forests, each *parṅāśālā* being a gurukula. Large areas blessed with natural beauty remained places of education *(vidhyā-bhūmi)*.

We must now establish at least a few *vidhyāśālās* to promote our national *śāsthrās* and arts. As far as possible they must be situated far away from urban centres with their degenerate ways of life. Nothing should be done that would detract from the beauty of their natural surroundings. As for the students, they should not fall victim to modern fashions, in the matter of dress, etc. Also there should be no big buildings either to house the schools, or to accommodate the students and the staff.

Village Statistics

When I go visiting places I see boards displayed by the local panchayats. Written on the board are facts and figures relating to the village concerned: population, area, crops, the number of literate inhabitants, etc. In addition, the percentage of literate people in countries like England, America and Japan are also given to impress upon us how low the corresponding percentage in India are. The authorities display these figures to provide the motivation for our nation too to advance like foreign countries in literacy and education. They believe perhaps that by such propaganda people will be persuaded to send their children to schools and that education will, as a result, become more widespread.

The Essential Statistics

It occurs to me that we must find out how many people of character and learning there are in a village and display the figures on the board. Suppose figures are given for each village of its literates and its people of character and the percentage for the two categories. Will you learn from the board that where there are more literate people there are also more individuals of good character?

'How do you find out the man of character in any locality?' it will be asked. 'Is your suggestion practicable?' These are reasonable questions.

An alternative occurs to me. Even if you cannot make a list of people of character and others, you could make another list easily. The police and the civil courts maintain a list of pickpockets, tax evaders, people arrested for crimes like thefts, fraud, impersonation, prostitution, murder, dacoity, etc. Even if you do not have the figures for such criminals the number of 'cases' may be available. So if mention is made on the panchayat board of the number of criminals - or the number of criminal cases - instead of the number of literate people, we will obtain certain useful facts.

Literacy and Crime

Wherever education is more 'advanced' and widespread the incidence of crime is also higher - this speaks for the type of education given all over the world. It is in countries where there is a rapid growth of schools, colleges and post-graduate courses that crime is also on the increase.

Among unlettered people living in the forests and mountains the police have very little work to do. These people have no need for lawyers.

As modern education takes strides, more and more novel forms of crime develop and also new skills in cheating and fraud. If crimes like the fraud and the corruption practiced in a shroud of secrecy do not reach the law courts it is because thy have behind them the new skills acquired by criminals. Three-fourths of the crimes committed in any locality do not come to the notice of the police or the courts. It is not only the incidence of civil offences but bank robberies, spraying an entire group of people with bullets, staging coups, toppling governments with muscle and money power-all such crimes and offences are executed in a clever and well-planned manner and we are made possible because of modern education. Apart from these, crimes like brawls, people being threatened with pistols or the shooting of innocent citizens are increasing day by day in countries where education is widespread.

Among the uneducated Ādivasis there may occasionally be a family quarrel or a tribal dispute in which a head is lopped off. That is a crime committed in anger, an act done on a momentary impulse. The Ādivasis are otherwise innocent of the sort of crimes mentioned earlier. The unlettered aborigines are incapable of crimes like forgery and cheating or well-planned and organized robberies and thefts.

Is Education Unnecessary?

Does the foregoing suggest that there is no need for education? Have not great men spoken about the imperative need for education? 'Writing and arithmetic are like the two eyes', they say. *Avvai*, the great Tamil saint-poetess, says that one who does not know writing is like a tree. And Bharthruhari, the Sanskrit poet, has it that a man without *vidhyā* is an animal: *'vidhyāvihīnah paśuh.'*

Our own experience of how educated people behave or conduct themselves is one thing and what great men have said in praise of education is another. How do we reconcile the two? If we examine the matter a little deeply we will see that there is nothing irreconcilable between the two. The education that great men speak about or have in mind is different from the system prevalent today. There will be no incidence of crime if we implement the type of education that they have in mind. The great men who spoke about the need for education did not have in mind a system calculated to develop only the intelligence. Education, according to them, must nurture devotion. Such a view is in agreement with what *Tiruvalluvar*, the celebrated Tamil poet, says 'What is the use of learning if one does not develop devotion to the word?'

It is because education is not connected with the divine, because it does not inculcate fear of God and concerns itself only with knowledge, that it has become perverse and led to undesirable consequences.

The Land of White men and Muslims

It may be remarked: 'There is religious education in many countries. But there too you encounter the sort of crimes and misconduct you spoke about'. I concede that what obtains in the West - prayer, teaching of the Bible, etc - is not enough. A student is bound by the discipline of religious observances so that the waywardness of his mind is corrected. It is because the mind is let free, without any control that crimes are committed. In the West students are not brought under the discipline of religious practices. That apart, the intellectuals there believe that religion comes only next to science (even older people there believe so). They are neither here nor there.

Consider, on the other hand, the Muslim countries. The crimes I spoke about are not much in evidence there. On a state level they may covet or capture other lands, stage coups, but as individual citizens of their own lands they cannot be faulted so much. When people of the countries surrounding them are engaged in wrongful action and conflict, they too are drawn into their ways - but not to the same extent as others. The reason for this is that religious discipline is very pronounced among Muslims. In addition, similar to our *Dharma Sāsthrās* , they have a system called the Sharia on which their law of punishment is based. Muslim states in general have not evolved any new jurisprudence and still follow the Sharia'. Unlike people in the West, Muslims are generally deeply proud of their religion. For that reason the incidence of crime in their countries is not a high as in other lands, the reason being that they do not dare to go against the tenets of their religion to the same extent as people in other countries go against theirs. Don't we see that, unlike people in the West who are fickle in their fashion and live a life of unfettered freedom, most Muslims still follow, as far as possible, their old modes of dress, behaviour, etc. It may be said on the whole that, if a people are brought under a system of discipline, they will not be involved in crime over-much. Although Muslims have done much harm to the Hindu religion, we cannot but speak in appreciation of their pride in, and commitment to their religion.

In The Communist Countries

We see the same (that is less incidence of crime) in the communist countries where there is a curb on the religious spirit. In China and the Soviet Union where people are not allowed to have anything to do with religion, the incidence of crime is very low. Believers like us (āstikās) cannot of course accept the communist doctrine. But for that reason we cannot but concede that, as a result of the stern discipline imposed in the communist countries, the incidence of crime is low and people there do not abandon themselves to their impulses or freely commit offences. The communist regime was established by freeing people from the bonds of religion, with the promise that all people would be made equal and would become comrades of one another. But, realizing that without the bonds of religion it would not be possible to maintain order among the people, they bound them by something else - they substituted religion with the sterner discipline of the state!

However, it is not a matter of pride for a society to maintain order through fear - fear of man-made laws and fear of the men enforcing them. The right thing for it is to maintain order and discipline through fear of the lord and His laws. But nobler still, and a matter of greater pride, is to love the Lord and not stray in the least from the dharma that He embodies.

But everybody will not measure up to such a level or ideal. So the gurus conducted *vidhyāsālās* according to the *sāsthrās* and the laws laid down by the Lord and brought the younger generation under control as policemen enforcing the divine law (policemen who combined strictness with grace and compassion). Children were led on the right path. The gurus demonstrated that in this manner education, far from encouraging young people to commit wrongs, promoted the growth of virtue and noble qualities.

Life in this country is imbued with the religious spirit. But it is our great misfortune that, like the communists who are opposed to religion, our republican government has resolved that only secular education will be imparted to children in India. Unlike in communist countries where the state enforces order in the life of its citizens, people in India are allowed to live with all the bonds of discipline loosened.

Vidhyā With Humility

Humble devotion to the gurus is part of the devotion to *Īswarā*, and it is this which gives education its true character. Without the diet restrictions of humble devotion the medicine called *vidhyā* will not be efficacious. That is why from the time of *Krishṅa Paramāthmā* education and humility have been braided together and students made *'vidhyā-vinaya-sampanna'* (those possessing a wealth of learning and humility). Such humility can be inculcated only in a gurukula in which the teacher, without caring for his salary, keeps the student in his home, feeds him and cares for him. It is to make this humility total and meaningful that the pupil begs for his food. As a beggar his pride drops like a feather and he becomes humble.

Devotion to *Īswarā* and humility before the guru help in subduing the learner's ego (*ahamkārā*). That learning which does not erase the 'I-consciousness' will lead only to peril. Religious observance, devotion to *Īswarā*, serving the guru and right education - these will obliterate the student's *'ahamkārā'* and render him pure. Without these education will make him swollen-headed. He will be inclined to boast: 'See how much I've learned.' They speak about '*vidhyā*-garva'; conceit in learning or in education.

Mere outward adherence to *anushtānā* (religious observances) will not do, nor is it enough to serve one's guru and become devoted to *Īśwarā* for appearance's sake. We often hear people remarking of some scholar or other. 'He's devout and strict in his religious observances. But how conceited is he about his learning!' Many scholars, who seem to be *āsthikās*, are vain about their knowledge. Seeing himself as one such *Thāyumānavaswāmi* said : They are good. They are good' the Tamil saint-poet thus praises the unlettered twice. And he laments : 'What do I say of my *karmā*? Educated though I am I have no true knowledge.'

The student will learn to be humble if he is truly devoted inwardly, is strict in his religious observances and has faith in his guru. If the uneducated are good to some extent, how much more virtuous, how much nobler in nature, must be the truly educated? If the educated become accustomed to wrong-doing more than even the forest-dwellers, it is because their *'ahamkārā'* has grown as a result of their education or, more correctly, the method according to which they have been taught.

Gurukulavāsā to Curb 'Aham' :

Gurukulavāsā is of the greatest help in destroying the ego. If a student is asked to be devoted to what seems a remote *Īśwarā* and if he is asked to study the *sāsthrās* belonging to the remote past, it will not be easy for him to learn the qualities of discipline and humility. If at all he acquires any good qualities it will be on a superficial level. That is why the pupil was taken in his childhood itself to a great man and entrusted to his care. The sincere and untainted devotion of the guru and his *anushtānā*, based on dharma and *karmā*, served as an example to the disciple and he too learned these qualities. (To explain the Paramaguru's statement: Education given in the abstract will have little value. In a gurukula, the teacher is a living example to be followed - a living illustration of what is to be learned through the *sāsthrās*).

Why not Possible?

Such a noble system as *gurukulavāsā* should not be given up on the plea that it is impracticable today. Why is it impracticable? In the previous generation, why, until the beginning of this generation, some *śāsthrās* and arts were promoted through *gurukulavāsā*. The subjects concerned were not taught as extensively as they should have been, but to the extent they were taught it was in keeping with the gurukula system.

The ancient tradition of our music dealt with in the 'Bharata-*śāsthrā*' and *Śilappadhikaram* mingled with the style that the Muslims brought with them to become Hindustani music in the North. And our own tradition developed further as Carnatic music. During the past 400 or 500 years these two traditions have grown and earned the respect of all the world: indeed they constitute a great cultural treasure of our nation. In both systems, great *vidvāns*, great ustads and Pandits have appeared generation after generation. Has not all this progress been achieved without the establishment of any big school or college and mostly through the gurukula system? Colleges for music were established only some 40 to 50 years ago.

Thanjāvūr painting, woodcraft, Pattamada mats - we send them from India as presents at royal weddings in England, at coronation cerremones, etc., and we take pride in doing so. In which schools or colleges were these arts and crafts taught and how have they come to survive until today? These crafts have been kept alive by individual artists and craftsmen who give training at home to their own children and others.

Responsibility of the Public

The gurukula system of education must be revived as far as possible. It must be implemented for *Vēdhic* learning more than for other subjects. Few *Vēdhic* gurus are to be found today who have the qualifications required for an *āchāryā* and who will take full responsibility for their pupils and maintain them as well as their own families without expecting any material rewards. Such gurus were in abundance in the past when there was royal patronage. We, who claim to be rulers in the present-day democracy, must take the place of the kings of old and join together to create the funds necessary to save this system from extinction.

For the Growth of Vēdha-Vidhyā

The little work done by a few people to promote *Vēdhic* learning here and there is in danger of becoming disorganized. It has become necessary to centralize it. For this purpose the *Matā* (the *Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītam)* has drawn up a number of plans and created a trust 1 with the objective of preserving the *Vēdhās*. The people in charge of this trust may be approached for details of the scheme. It is your duty to give it monetary and material help so that the *Vēdhā-śāsthra-vidhyā* will flourish and grow particularly according to the ancient tradition. You are all born in this country. Whether you like it or not, don't you suffer its climate, sometimes shivering in the cold season or perspiring in the heat of summer? Now bear this burden of the duty of maintaining the *Vēdha-vidhyā* as another discomfort. Since I am your guru you must, after all, submit to my browbeating! (The Paramaguru laughs heartily as he says this).

A common objective of these schemes is to pay the teachers well, 'Paying well' does not mean that the teachers will live in bungalows and move about in cars. The aim is that they should not suffer any hardship. In these days, when inflation has become a permanent feature of life, even a 'peon' (I wonder whether people will be angry when I use the very word) gets Rs.400 or Rs.500 a month as salary. The *Vēdhic* scholars must be paid adequately so that they may live with a sense of self-respect, even if they do not live ostentatiously. Don't you ask a musician to sing for two hours, and then honour him and pay him Rs.500 or Rs.1,000 (Musicians are paid much more today, especially in the North).

Do teachers exist without students? We are in a woeful state today because people are averse to subjects like the *Vēdhās*, *śāsthrās* and culture. The stipend paid to students of *Vēdhic pātaśālās* must be attractive enough to draw them to these schools right from their childhood. After finishing his studies, a student must be enabled to subsist at least on gruel (kanji) for the rest of his life. For this purpose some money must be placed in his name in fixed deposit. There should be no risk of the principal being squandered by him and he must receive only the interest. We do all this now on a small a scale. After the death of the student the deposit will devolve to his family instead of to the trust. Only by such means - making provision for a legacy - will future generations be motivated to study the *Vēdhās*. Their conscience, a little aroused, they will follow in the footsteps of their fathers and grandfathers. They must be inspired to think thus : Like our father and grandfather, we too must dedicate ourselves to *Vēdhic* learning.' Education in *Vēdhā-śāsthrā* will then continue to be imparted in the proper traditional manner in the future.

Learning and Money

Vidhyā for a sake of *vidhyā*' is the highest of ideals for teachers as well as for taught. *Vidhyā* or learning for money - is a middling principle or goal. Learning only for money is the lowest objective of education. Nowadays the outlook of people all over the world is so debased that they want money without learning. That being the case, adhering to a very high ideal may not serve any practical purpose. That is why we must promote our *vidhyā* by providing a fair measure of monetary help to teachers as well as to students.

All the same, I have been constantly pleading for the creation of such conditions as would help the emergence of at least a few gurukulās of the ideal type.

Bhikshācharyā

The highest form of gurukula education is that which does not have money for its motive. There is nothing to equal the gurukula conducted by gurus who, in a spirit of utter self-sacrifice and without caring for hardships like hunger, spread learning with single-minded devotion. Students would shine in learning only when their gurus combine erudition with high-mindedness. It is all right for such gurus not to worry about their own hunger, but what about their disciples? A young student should not wilt in hunger. In the old days a Brahmin who did adhyayana had family property; it is not so today. When the *Vēdhic* scholar has to struggle for his livelihood how can he look after his pupil? It is here that the pupil's *bhikshācharyā* comes in good stead. The student must sustain himself by begging for his food. Not only that. If he goes begging to four or five houses for his own food, he must go to another four or five for his master's food. As stated before, since the teacher should not eat cooked food brought from others, the student must beg for rice (uncooked), pulses, vegetables, etc., for his master and his family.

Instead of the student going to different houses on the same day to beg for his food, he may go to one house once a week. That is, he may go to different houses on different days for alms. The families that give *bhikshā* would not feel, 'Oh, he comes every day.' However, if the pupil has to beg for his teacher's food also, he will have to go to several houses, receiving a little from each. All this depends on the state of the gurukula concerned, the attitude of the villagers (people of the locality) and other circumstances. On the whole, infusing life into the gurukula in which the students practice *bhikshācharyā* must be regarded as noble work.

One or Two Enough

It would be enough if you have one noble guru and one good śishyā like this. The soul power (*Āthma*-śakthi) of the guru, though not perceived by the world, will sow the seeds of good intentions in its mind. When the student develops high qualities through the discipline of *āchārā* (conduct) and the power of *manthrās* and acquires Brahma-thējas (divine luster), he too will acquire the qualities of his guru.

Preserving the Ideal

It may be asked: 'where do you find such teachers and students these days? Why do you speak about things that serve no purpose?' But I do speak because as one having the title of guru I must not fail in my duty of at least reminding people orally of our high ideals. You should not allow a system to die away without at least being conscious of its ideals. After all, Jesus Christ did not worry about who would follow him when he said: '....whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.' When people expected to get things at the crackling of a finger so to speak, when textile mills mushroomed every day and when people became more and more fond of fashionable wear, did not Gandhiji keep exhorting them: 'Make your yarn yourself and wear clothes woven from it. Eat hand-pounded rice.'

If an ideal is forsaken as impractical without any effort on our part, it will naturally never be put into practice. Team after team attempted to climb, Everest and returned without success. Were they worried about whether their work was of any use to the world? Without yielding to despair, the mountaineers persisted in their efforts and, finally, one day Everest was conquered.

The gurukula system of education will be a blessing to mankind and it should not be given up on the pretext that it is good only on paper.

'Their' Sacrifice and 'Our' Sacrifice

There is nothing that we can do for the sacrifice made by me guru and his disciple. If the guru and his disciple accept any help from us, how will they be entitled to be called thyāgis? (How could you speak of their having made sacrifices?) So here is an ideal that you and I must all the time keep speaking about so as to inspire people to make sacrifices. Otherwise there is nothing that we can do.

The scheme I mentioned is the next step: creating a corpus fund, instituting donations, scholarships, etc., and caring for *Vēdhic* schools. It is in this context that we can make a little sacrifice. The scheme is this; give material and (make a sacrifice by offering material help); spend a little time to give some thought to the subject; make a sacrifice by working for the cause; and preserve the *Vēdhās* from decline in this manner. By such means you will merit the blessings of *Īśwarā*.

I hold *bhikshācharyā* to be of the utmost importance. It makes a student humble and from humility arises a host of other good qualities. So in the scheme itself there is a sub-scheme for '*niyamādhyayāna*' (the old system of learning with the observance of *bhikshāchāryā* and other rules). The student who practices *niyamādhyayāna* receives a larger stipend.

We are somehow implementing the scheme of *gurukulavāsā* keeping in view its high ideals. In this one guru teaches ten students and teacher and taught reside together in the gurukula. Using the word 'we' is not right. It is not proper to speak of 'us' as different from 'you'. This scheme is for all of you - all of us - to implement. The support for it may not be much to speak about but the response is sufficient to encourage the belief that *Vēdhic* learning will take root. It is your responsibility to see that the work is done in a manner that earns the praise of all. There is nothing by which your janma (birth in this world) could be spent more rewardingly.

Today Brahmins who have done adhyayana are to be met only in a few places. If we ask them to teach a couple of students they tell us : 'A couple of students means what? Who comes to learn from us? We may take the plate round (similar to taking the hat round), but we won't teach the *Vēdhās*. You know it won't fetch us even a morsel of food. And still you ask us to teach! Even if somebody comes forward to learn from us it is doubtful whether we will remember what we have learned.' Should not these Brahmins be helped to make further progress in their learning? Could there be anything more shameful for us than that they should forget all their learning?

Vēdha Bhāshyam, Vēdhāngā, Vēdhānthā

Though the branches of learning are many, the ultimate goal is Brahma-*vidhyā*. In the 'Vibhuti *Yōgā*' of the *Gītā*, the Lord says: Of the *Vēdhā* I am the *Sāman;* of mountains, Meru; of trees, the as̄vattha; of animals, the lion; of birds, Garuda; and of months, *Mārgāsirsa*, *Bhagawān* adds :' Of the branches of *vidhyā*, I am Brahma-*vidhyā* (*Āthma-vidhyā*).

'Adhyāthma-vidhyā vidhyānām'

The ultimate purpose of a mata (like the *Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītam* and other *Matās*). Is the teaching of Brahma-*vidhyā*. The *Kānchi Matā* has taken upon itself the responsibility of propagating *Vēdhādhyayana*, the study of the *Vēdha-Bhāshya* (the meaning of the *Vēdhās*), the Vēdhāngās which are, as the name suggests, the limbs of the *Vēdhās* and, last, the Upanishads which constitute *Āthma-vidhyā*. The work done so far is not at all adequate and much more remains to be done for the study and propagation of the *Vēdhās* and *Vēdhānthā*.

It is my wish that in the *pātas̄ālās* established for *Vēdhādhyāyana* all subjects connected with the *Vēdhās* must be taught and propagated. And more and more *pātas̄ālās* should come up to do such work.

During the past few generations *Vēdhic* learning has declined. In one aspect or branch of it the decline has been particularly bad. There are at least a few *pātaśālās* for the adhyayana of the *Vēdhās* (that is to memorise the texts, the *Vēdhā-*Samhithās) but schools for teaching the meaning of the *Vēdhās* are very few. Even among the *'gaṅapātins'* there are not many who know the meaning of the *Vēdhic manthrās*; they only chant the hymns. Arrangements are being made to teach *Vēdhic* students the *Vēdhā-Bhāshya* and conduct examinations in it. We must have the co-operation of all in this.

The *Vēdha-Bhāshya* is directly connected with the *Vēdhās.* The Vēdhāngās must also be propagated. Particularly Vyākaraṅa (grammar), jyōtisha which developed later into astronomy and mathematics.

Among the four '*upāngās*' of the *Vēdhās*, the second part of Mīmāmsā is *Vēdhānthā*. The doctrines of *Śankarā*, *Rāmānuja* and Madhva come under *Vēdhānthā*. As far as this *Matā* (*Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītā*) is concerned our chief responsibility is promoting Adhvaitha- *Vēdhānthā* and we hold gatherings of scholars (sadas) for the purpose.

The Mutt has been holding the Adhvaitha *Sabhā* from before the turn of the century. We also support the publication of books in this *sampradāyā* or tradition. In the same manner, the *Rāmānuja* and Madhva *Matās* support the *Viśishtādhvaitha* and Dvaitha *sampradāyās* respectively. (If I were to speak the truth, I should say that the Mādhvās and Srivaishṅavās have better commitment to their systems and religious observances than *Smārthās* have to Adhvaitha and the observances pertaining to it.

Although it is usual to speak of *Vēdhānthā* and *siddhānthā* as separate *Śaiva Siddhānthā* is a *Vēdhic* religion based on *Vēdhānthā*. It is promoted by the Ādhīnakartās (the heads of the

Śaiva Mutts in Tamil Nādu) Simlarly there are *Matālayās* which preserve the *sampradāyās* of Chaitanya, *Nimbārkā*, *Vallabhā* and so on.

'Philosophy' taught in universities is mostly the *Vēdhā*ntic system. Since, all over the world, philosophical inquiry is given more importance than religious observances, *Vēdhānthā* is gaining importance day by day. The purely philosophical part of *Vēdhānthā* without its theistic aspects has become world-famous. Indeed, *Vēdhānthā* itself has come to be regarded as Adhvaitha and this has caused resentment and anger among followers of other *sampradāyās*. That apart, thanks to the work of universities, *Vēdhānthā*, more than any other ancient *śāsthrā*, is a living force today.

There is no place in this *Vēdhānthā* (studied as a university course) for *āchārā* and *anushtānā*. Besides, in the name of research, expression is given to views contrary to those held by our ancestors. (Although they say that they are scientific and open-minded, some of these researchers are biased in their views and theories). So much so we are not fully satisfied with the sort of *Vēdhānthā* propagated by the universities.

Let people of other countries laud the pure metaphysics of Adhvaitha and endeavour as best they can to study it. May be some rare individuals among them, by virtue of the merit earned in their previous birth, will gain mastery in it. Must there not be something remarkable in their previous birth that they have been drawn to *Vēdhānthā*? However, as far as we are concerned, *Vēdhic āchārā* and *karmānushtānā* are vital. Never mind the research work done on Adhvaitha or the number of books written on it. Knowledge of Adhvaitha or monism gained in this manner will be purely intellectual and will be far from being realized without *āchārā* and *anushtānā*. *Āchāryā*, who established Adhvaitha, firmlyl laid down that a man should undertake philosophical inquiry only after becoming inwardly pure through *karmānushtānā* and devotion to *Īśwarā*. Unlike followers of other *sampradāyās*, who are exclusively devoted to one deity, the Adhvaithin is devoted to one or another manifestation of the *Paramāthman* who is the source of all. Where is the place for devotion to a deity in university education? How does one become inwardly pure in it?

We must provide facilities not only to support traditional scholars of *Vēdhānthā-śāsthrā* but also to students to learn under them in the same traditional manner.

Comparative Philosophy

Universities conduct research in comparative religion and philosophy. They inquire into various systems to find out how they agree with one another or differ. This kind of research is admirable. Even in the traditional system of learning it is essential for the student of one *sampradāyā* to know the standpoint of other *sampradāyās*. Take the *śāsthrā* of any tradition or system. It seeks to establish its doctrine by citing the views of other systems and by trying to refute them. The method adopted by the protagonists of our *śāsthrā* was to open the discussion by citing the views of the opposing side. Develop them and then rebut them to establish their own system of Adhvaitha. Such was the method adopted, more importantly among others, by *Śankara Bhagavadpādhā*. However, people who learn any *śāsthrā*, according to the present method, do not study other *śāsthrās* on their own. They do not go beyond what others have quoted from these other systems. The *śāsthrās* of the rival systems must be studied thoroughly. It will help in understanding the truth without being prejudiced by one's own views and predilections.

In any debate each individual arrives at conclusions according to his degree of maturity or wisdom. But, whatever the conclusion arrived at intellectually, it may have no relation to his inner feelings on the subject. A man adheres to beliefs that have made a deep impression on his mind. In the final analysis, Atmasathya (the truth of Self-realisation) is beyond debate. There is no denying this. However, when we take up a *śāsthrā*, to attain proficiency in it we must not only have a thorough grasp of it but we must have a fair measure of knowledge of other *śāsthrās* too. It is only then that we will be able to appreciate the greatness of others even though their systems of thought may not finally be acceptable to us. 'Only our philosophy, our system, is great. All else is empty' - such a narrow outlook has no place in the world of knowledge.

In this country there are many who are proficient in English. They must study the philosophical systems of other countries in addition to our own and write books on them. These books or their substance could be made known to students of colleges run according to the ancient method.

Similarities and Dissimilarities

Our intellectuals must be encouraged to examine our country's sciences and 'semi-sciences' (of the latter I will speak to you shortly) and compare them with modern Western sciences. The results of their inquiry must be made available to students of colleges run according to the old system.

We must not stop with finding out what our ancient texts have to say about a subject. We must try to reconcile their findings, wherever it is possible, with the theories of modern science. For example, the *Āyur Vēdhic* physician must accept what he may find beneficial for health in the Western or some other system but which of course is not contrary to the tenets of *ĀyurVēdhā*. Similarly, allopaths also must accept *ĀyurVēdhic* methods of treatment that they may find useful.

The Purāṅās

Among the Vēdhāngās, the *Purāṅās* seem to be popular today, considering the number of pravachanas (discourses) the Harikathā recitals held everywhere. You must realize that of the 18 *Purāṅās* not many have become popular. As for the Upa-*Purāṅās* and *Sthalapurāṅās,* they are being forgotten. We must honour the few existing scholars in these *Purāṅās*, Upa-purarans and *Sthalapurāṅās,* and look for students who will learn under them and will eventually become scholars themselves.

The same arrangements must be made for the *Pūrvamīmāmsā*, Tharka (*Nyāya-śāsthrā*), the *Dharma Śāsthrā* and other *upāngās*. Among these, the *Dharma Śāsthrā* will help us in observing *āchārā* and *anushtānā* and make our lives conform to the true traditions of Indian culture. On an intellectual plane, it is important to propagate Mīmāmsā-*śāsthrā* and Tharka-*śāsthrā*.

Āgama-Śāsthrā :

Apart from all these, there is the manthra-*śāsthrā* which is like a vast ocean. (There is a work called Manthra Mahōdadhi - 'Mahōdadhi' means a great ocean).

Āgama-śāsthrā comes as a companion to manthra-*śāsthrā*. It deals with the building of temples, investing them with the divine presence *(Daivasānnidhya)* through *manthrās*, etc. There are a number of Āgamās which deal at length with the building of temples, the installation of deities and the method of Pūjā or worship followed for different deities, etc. It is the temple that brings the common people in touch with the *Paramāthmā*. That is why I am particularly anxious that light should be shed on this *śāsthrā*. Recognizing the importance of the Āgamās, assemblies have been held, at intervals during the past, of such people well versed in the Āgamās as are still in our midst - *Śivāchāryās*, *Bhattās* and others. The government has also given encouragement by establishing schools to teach the Āgamās. However, I am not sure how far these institutions are conducted according to the *śāsthrās.* Our politicians are interested not so much in adhering to the *śāsthrās* as in bringing into everything, irrelevant things like the place of the mother tongue and the equality of castes. The true spirit of the *Āgama-śāsthrās* will be kept alive if they are taught according to the gurukula system, by a *Bhattā* or a *Śivāchāryā*, to four or five students.

Vāsthu-Śāsthrā :

We saw how the construction of temples is described in the Āgamās. But where is a temple to be built in a village or town, how is the village itself to be planned how are the houses to be built and where should they be located? Answers to such questions are to be found in the ancient *Vāsthu-śāsthrā.* In building a house or planning a village, it is not enough to bother about ventilaltion, sunlight, drinking water, sewage, etc. People pay attention, or seem to pay attention, only to these. Vasty-*śāsthrā* deals with all these but something more important also. It tells you how a house should be built and how a village should be laid out in such a manner as to ensure that they receive the radiation of divine powers. *Vāsthu-śāsthrā* helps us to construct a house in such a way as to make it suitable for our religious observances.

Śilpa-Śāsthrā :

When we talk of the construction of temples we at once think of *śilpa-śāsthrā* or architecture and sculpture. There is such a profusion of sculptures in India that the whole world has not ceased to marvel at them. Associated as they are with divinity, they are not meant to rouse bad thoughts but to purify the mind. It is not enough to admire them as part of our cultural heritage. The sculptors and sthapatis must be honoured and we must encourage students to study under them. Sculptors and sthapatis are invited to the *āgama* sadas (conducted by the *Kānchi Matā*) and given a place of honour. After we started holding the sadas, the Lord has opened his eyes (our starting the sadas itself, after all, was possible only because of His grace) and many temples are being renovated and new temples are being built. There is a somewhat bright period today for *śilpis* and for the *śilpa-śāsthrā* and its teaching.

The government has established a school and a workshop for *śilpa-śāsthrā*. This subject was originally taught by Brahmins and became the hereditary occupation of a separate caste. So, nowadays, there is not much scope for diluting it with elements that militate against the spirit of the *śāsthrā* and *āchārā*. To make a carving on a pillar or to make an image, the artist or artisan has to toil for hours together every day. If a Brahmin were to do this job, he would not be able to perform his sacrifices and other religious duties for the well-being of all the world. Grammar, logic, Mīmāmsā and other subjects are taught orally, learned aurally and retained mentally. *Śilpa-śāsthrā* demands day-long physical effort. That is why it was entrusted to a separate caste.

In the same way, Brahmins taught only the theory in respect of sciences like medicine. The practice was entrusted to other castes. Such sciences or arts became a means of livelihood for them and being their sole profession or occupation they gained thorough proficiency in them. With the skill acquired by better experience, they were able to give practical training in arts like sculpture to their children even without possessing any theoretical knowledge in them.

The sthapatis, however, knew enough theory not to violate the *śāsthrā* in making images. They could even quote the rules pertaining to the making of a mandapa or a *vimanā* of a temple. Present-day sthapatis too do not lag behind in this respect. These artisans who constitute the *Viśvakarmā* community became expert teachers of their art. If they happened to be ignorant about some aspect or if they had a doubt about some point, they consulted their Brahmin guru.

Until recently, they lived in observing all *āchārā* wearing a tuft and panchakacham (dhoti that is tucked back). Even in these degenerate times it is a matter for congratulation that they maintain this style. The sthapatis wear the sacred thread and are vegetarians. They work according to the *śilpa-śāsthrā* and bear no ill-will towards Brahmins, nor are they opposed to Sanskrit. Some of them are well read in their *śāsthrā* and can explain passages in them.

Village Arts - Folk-Lore

Generation after generation, the Pūjāri has been seen rattling his drum and telling stories from the *Mahābhāratā*. He too practices an art and that art also is based on a *śāsthrā*. It should not die away with him and I ask you to make sure that it is taught to his sons or other children. Make arrangements on a permanent basis with the creation of a fund and the provision of material help. Similarly, steps must be taken to promote 'karakam', puppetry and the arts connected with temples, deities and Puranic lore and to ensure that they do not become extinct with our generation. In our country all arts, whether they belong to the village or the town, have a divine connection.

Moulding teachers for ancient arts and sciences

There are yet so many other *śāsthrās*. Basic *śāsthrās* have existed in our own country for subjects otherwise thought to be modern like physics, chemistry, zoology, geology and engineering. We may learn about them from Varahamihira's *Bruhathsamhithā* and *Bhōjarāja's Sāmarāngaṇasūthrā*. But, as a result of the popularity gained by Western sciences, there are few people conversant with the sciences of our own country. So it is almost impossible to find people who can teach them. But scholars and research workers should study old books and palm-leaf manuscripts to find out more about our ancient sciences. They should then try to give instruction in them to others.

It is sad that today for certain types of learning there are not only no students, there are no teachers also. Intellectuals and research workers must study old books and palm-leaf manuscripts. Or we must encourage them to look for such books and manuscripts themselves and create facilities for their study. In this way we must mould teachers for our ancient arts and sciences and look for students who will study under them.

Vidhyā That Transcends The Laws of Nature

There were *śāsthrās* in our country based on the natural forces and others which could not be explained through the natural laws known to us. These latter are neglected today or rejected as 'humbug', Without taking such an attitude, we must study such *śāsthrās*, verify whether or not they are really 'humbug' and try to apply them in practice. My own view is that there may be 'humbugs' among those practicing such arts but the *śāsthrās* on which they are based may not themselves be 'humbug'. Among these are Nādi *śāsthrā*, *Praśna*, Chāyā-purusha *śāsthrā* (reading a man's life or fortune from this shadow).

Our old sciences have not entirely been swept away by the new sciences. We still have in our midst people who practice Nādi *śāsthrā*. This and similar *śāsthrās* are scorned as 'unscientific' but they may be regarded as 'super-sciences'. People practicing them must be supported and we must try to preserve teir *vidhyā* by finding students who will learn under them. Rasavāda-*śāsthrā* and astrology, which are semi-sciences, must also be developed. There are a number of astrologers who are wealthy and influential. But my concern is about preserving the *vidhyā* called jyōtishā or astrology.

Medical Science

All over India there are a number of *Āyur Vēdhic* physicians and *Siddha vaidyās* who are prosperous and influential. But we should not think that the *śāsthrā* is their concern alone. We must do everything possible to preserve the ancient Indian sciences of healing and develop them and encourage young people to study them.

Yōga-Śāsthrā

I left out *Yōga-śāsthrā*. '*Yōga-śāsthrā*' is generally understood to mean Patanjali's work, *Ashtānga-Yōgā*. There are schools of *Yōga* which are its branches or which have developed from it or which are not even part of it. *Kuṅḍalini-Yōgā*, *HathaYōgā*, *Kriya-Yōgā* - there are so many types.

As a *vidhyā*, *Yōgā* must be practiced with the utmost care and caution. People who take to it must also possess considerable maturity of mind. The *śāsthrās* enjoin us to perform *prāṅayāma* for a few moments so as to clear the mind, help us meditate on the Lord. This is also a part of *Yōgā*. But great caution is called for in taking to *Yōgā* seriously. If one practices *prāṅayāma* incorrectly or beyond one's capacity, it might affect one's brain, even upset one's mental balance. *Yōgā* which is meant to keep body and mind sound and healthy will do harm to both if not practiced properly. What happens when the *Yōga-śāsthrā* is pursued by people who do not have sufficient maturity of mind? They go in search of siddhis (performing feats, miracles) and try to acquire extraordinary powers with a view to becoming famous. They try to lure someone or other and, if they fail, torment him or her with their dubious *yōgic* power. When *Yōgā* is not learned by mature and deserving people it will mean encouraging a new line of perverse practitioners and the consequences will be dangerous.

There are many *Yōgāsanās* exclusively meant for bodily health. A bit of caution is necessary here too, but the possibilities they present for *Yōga sādhanā* (*yōgic* feats) and the consequent danger to the practitioner and others are not much. For some time there has been talk that *Yōgāsanās* must be taught in schools. For this we need teachers capable of giving instruction to children in the intricate manipulation of the body, arms, legs, etc. Moreover there is a particular time in the day to practice *Yōgāsanā*. The rule is that the stomach must be empty. Not to observe such rules is to invite illness. *Yōgā* should be taught on a mass scale only after making sure about the observance of such rules and conditions. If our children are to remain in good health they must be taught *Yōgāsanās* in a proper manner.

In other *Yōgā* practices far more caution is called for. They must be taught to deserving students by *yōgins* of excellent character. It is doubtful whether we can persuade such *yōgins* to come and teach in our gurukulās. It is also not easy to get students for them. The *yōgins* themselves will decide who is fit to receive instruction from them and they will do so through their *Āthma-*ṣakthi. There are quite a number of yogāsramās today. Indeed, the trouble is there are too many of them. We hear the word '*Yōgā*' more than ever from the lips of so many people. It occurs to me that we could have a gurukula not for the practice of *Yōgā* but to teach its theory. That will help in the emergence of teachers with a true understanding of the *Yōga-ṣāsthrā*. Their presence will be a warning to people who stoop to anything in the name of *Yōgā* and try to lure people for their own selfish ends. It will ensure that only āsramās teaching authentic *Yōgā* will come into existence.

Only theory - no practice :

There must be the same approach to the *rasavādā-ṣāsthrā*. Otherwise, on the pretext of converting brass into gold, people will commit all kinds of fraud. The study of *rasavādā* must be confined to an intellectual understanding of the subject. There should be no practical demonstration except to a limited extent on the part of the teacher to show that the science is based on fact. The whole idea is to reveal *Īśwarā*'s gifts to man and man's capacity to understand things. The study must merely arouse the student's sense of wonder. Altogether, *rasavādā* is a subject to be handled with the utmost caution. But for that reason it should not be allowed to die out.

In Vēdhānthā Too

One aspect of what I spoke to you about *Yōga-śāsthrā* is applicable also to *Vēdhānthā*. Just as it is not possible to appoint a *yōgi* as a guru and get students to learn under him, so it is with a jnanin (one who is enlightened) who has constantly endeavoured to study *Vēdhānthā* and obtained mastery in it. If we have in mind a *Vēdhānthā* system with bhakthi or devotion associated with it, it may not be possible for us to obtain a teacher for our gurukula who is devout and has also mastery of the system. We may establish our gurukula to teach *Vēdhānthā* merely on the intellectual plane, not for the student to translate knowledge of the system taught into inward experience or realization. I told you that even in the old system of education, *Vēdhānthā* was taught like this. A disciple who studied in a school sought a great *jnānā*-guru or a great devotee or a great *yōgi* and did *sādhanā* under him.

Even when the *śāsthrās* are taught purely to impart knowledge (i.e.without going beyond for realization) there must be emphasis on character and right conduct based on the performance of religious duties. A student will be moulded properly only if he is brought under discipline and faith and other virtues are inculcated in him. I would like to stress again and again the fact that education so imparted will not be misused in the life of the student later, and will be employed only for the good of mankind.

All of us must endeavour to provide facilities for the study and promotion of our national arts and *śāsthrās* in the traditional manner and, as far as possible, on the lines of the gurukula system. Only then will good conduct and religious observances develop along with learning. There is a saying that, without *āchārā* and virtue, *Vēdhā* is not *Vēdhā*. *Tiruvalluvar* declares that for a Brahmin right conduct is above even learning.

What is to be done

What is the first step to be taken in this great task of promoting our national learning and shaping students of good conduct and character? All surviving *śāsthrajnās* (men learned in various *śāsthrās*) must be brought together in a gurukula or college and encouraged to teach the subjects in which they are adepts. Here, as far as possible, all books and palm-leaf and other manuscripts must be collected and preserved. Scholars must be given the incentive to conduct research in them. Aid must be provided to get at least important texts printed.

Learn and Teach

We must make sure that any individual well versed in a subject teaches at least a couple of students. Our ancients laid down the rule that a *vidvān* must teach and propagate the subject in which he is proficient. It is futile to keep one's learning to oneself. One must become a teacher and transmit one's learning to future generations.

Just as there are four stages in a man's life - *brahmachārya*, *gruhasthya*, *vānaprastha*, sanyāsa - there are four stages in teaching also. These are called 'adhiti', 'bōdha', '*ācharaña*', '*prachāraña*', 'Adhiti' means to learn. A man must first learn a subject thoroughly. Next he must try for *bōdha*, that is he must try to gain insight into, and proficiency in, what he has learned. The third is *ācharaña*. The first two are practiced to day by students with regard to a number of subjects. But it is in *ācharaña* that there is trouble. '*ācharaňa*' means weaving into our life the knowledge we have gained in a subject. In other words translating our knowledge in our practical life æ living in accordance with what we have learned.

The qualifications of a *vidvān* are not complete with the three. The fourth and final qualification is '*prachāraňa*'. It means taking care to see that what we have learned is not wasted but imparted at least to a few students. Propagating learning is '*prachāraňa*'.

Sriharsha has spoken about this with poetic elegance. He is the author of *Naishadham*, the story of Nala. Nala was the king of *Nishadha*, hence the name of the work *Naishadham*. It is a poetical work much appreciated by the learned. There is a saying : '*Naishadham vidvādaushadham*'. ('*Naishadham* is medicine for learned people.') In the passage descsribing how Nala learnt the *chathurdaśa-vidhyā*-s, the four stages are mentioned. The poet makes a pun on the word '*chathurdaśa*.'

The word '*chathurdaśa*' yields two meanings. One meaning is 'fourteen', 'Dasa' is ten; '*chathurdaśa* = four plus ten, that is fourteen. The four *Vēdhās*, their six Angas, the four *Upāngās*, together fourteen *vidhyā*-s. Another meaning of '*chathurdaśa*' = four dasas or four stages. The poet has played on the idea that after learning the *chathurdaśa-vidhyā*-s Nala translated them into the four stages of adhiti, *bōdha*, *ācharaňa* and *prachāraňa*.

Adhīthabōdha ācharaňa prachāraňai
Daśāśchathasrah praňayan nupādhipih
Chathurdaśathvam kruthavān kuthasvayam
Navēdhmi vidhyāsu chathurdaśasvayam

Propaganda

Prachārňa is not what it has come to mean today, the drumming of things, propaganda. Nowadays, statistics is employed as a means of high pressure publicity. 'We have installed so many pump-sets, so many villages have been electrified, so many crores have been spent on the plan'-so goes the official propaganda. Whether or not anything has been accomplished for the good of the people, the statistics is calculated to impress them and earn the government their appreciation.

Those who carry out religious conversations are highly skilled in propaganda. By giving money or through some other clever means they induce ignorant people to embrace their faith and annex village after village to their religion. Then they take a census of such people converted (who knows, they may add to the figures on their own) and announce: See, so many people have found Hinduism useless and come to our religion'. They carry on propaganda for their religion making use of such statistics.

Later, if we somehow manage to get hold of the converts and ask them, 'What is it that you like in their religion that induced you to embrace it?', they will just blink for an answer. If pressed for an answer they will say; 'It is not that there is anything that we didn't like in the Hindu religion. Even if there is anything that we didn't like there is nothing in the new religion that we like more. To speak the truth we know nothing about the new religion. We have no regard for it, nor are we interested in any way in religious matters. They gave us such and such things. They have promised to give more. They have also promised to give us certain 'rights'. It is for these reasons that we joined their religion, not because we understand it or are particularly fond of their beliefs.' They will thus speak to you the truth.

I say this because you should not mistake '*prachāraṇa*' for propaganda or a fraudulent kind of publicity campaign.

Creating an impression on others or confounding them with flattering figures concerning our achievements has never been a part of our cultural tradition. Our *sāsthrās* do not hold that *vidhyā* should be spread for the sake of propaganda based on statistics. I said in the beginning itself that the propagation of *vidhyā* is based on the belief that learning is meant only for those who can truly grasp what is taught. Such is the rule laid down in the *sāsthrās*.

Our tradition was established in the belief that each student becomes a *vidvān* first, then he becomes a guru to teach students on his own and make them *vidvāns* (scholars) themselves. The student becoming a guru and the guru in turn creating more *vidvāns* - thus has the line continued and evolved into our tradition.

Our forefathers believed that the sin incurred by a man who dies without passing on his *vidhyā* to at least a couple of students was greater than that incurred by another who dies with his wealth concealed, making it useless for others.

Financial Aid and Social Prestige

We must find out the scholars from amongst us, obtain students for them and create facilities for them to learn. Just as there is a 'chair' for some subject or other in universities and it is 'funded', so these scholars should be given donations in the same was as university professors are paid. Giving an award or a '*sanmāna*' does'nt mean flaunting a salver containing cash before the donee. Enhancing the prestige of a *vidvān* in the eyes of the entire community or society is also a '*sanmāna*'. Our tradition proclaims that the scholar is superior to the king, that he is honoured everywhere. This tradition, this aspect of our culture, should not be allowed to fade away.

It is my deeply-felt wish to bring together under the roof of our *Matā* all those learned in our ancient *sāsthrās* and to maintain them on a permanent basis. With their help we must create a sishyā-parampara in various subjects. Who knows the will of Ambā?

If there happens to be a student who is truly keen to study an ancient *śāsthrā*, are we going to tell him. 'There is no one to teach you your subject. Go and look for some book or manuscript. Who cares? No, we must not leave him to his fate. We must be able to provide facilities for his study. We must tell the young man: 'Come, my boy, we have been waiting for you. We had been looking for a teacher for you and now we have got one. He too has all the while been looking forward to teach a student like you.'

Scholars who do not know how to teach or who do not like to teach must be requested or prevailed upon to become teachers so that the *śāsthrās* in which they are proficient do not die, with them. Even if we do not succeed in involving such scholars in our scheme or if there are no students forthcoming we must arrange for their upkeep. Should we not honour men who have studied their chosen *śāsthrā* or art in all its aspects and help them to live in fair comfort? Even if they do not have students to teach, they must be respected and given encouragement. If not now, at some time later, their knowledge and worth will be revealed. They must be persuaded to speak before assemblies of learned men and notes of their speeches taken down. We could, through *pariprasna*, try to gain light on the subjects they have mastered. They could be made to write theses or other scholars could write such theses with their help. Thus we must do everything possible to preserve and propagate our traditional sciences and arts and other *śāsthrās*.

Be Vidvāns, Each of You :

It is not enough that you create facilities for others to learn the *śāsthrās*, though that is one of your essential duties. Every one of you must become proficient yourself in one of our traditional subjects, *vidhyā*-s or arts. Your duties do not end with going to your office, earning a salary and maintaining your family. There are hundreds of branches of learning that are part of the country's heritage. You must try to learn one of them at least. Apart from creating a group of teachers and students, every one of you must become a student yourself and, after gaining expert knowledge in a subject, become an *āchāryā* yourself with students learning under you.

If you are interested in linguistics, you may learn grammar, Niruktha, etc. If your interest is in debate you may learn Tharka. Are you fond of music? Learn to play the Veenā, the mrudanga or the jalataranga. Or be trained in vocal music. Or else get hold of a chisel and learn to sculpt. Many have handled the chisel and the hammer and the result is there for all to see; the *gōpurams* rising to the heavens and proclaiming to the world that the civilization of India is as lofty as the sky.

To Curb 'Aham'

The chisel is connected with the Lord. How did the sculptor dedicate his artistic skill or genius to the Lord? Whatever the art or science we take up we must practice it in the spirit that we are making an offering of it to *Īswarā*. Otherwise, it will lead to *ahamkārā*. We will tend to boast about our proficiency in this or that. The religious *pītās* are meant to help erase the ego of people who seek refuge under them. I am seated on one such *pītā*. Our great culture and traditions should not be in vain. It is due to this concern of mine that I am urging you to study some branch or other of our learning or ask you to become an artist. But in doing so I should not make you go in a direction that is contrary to the main purpose of the *Pītā*, that is to diminish the *ahamkārā* or ego-sense of people.

Everyone must become proficient in some art and, at the same time, have devotion. Bear this in mind as you learn: 'We learn everything only through *Īswarā*'s grace. All arts are manifestations of his grace.' You must also use your knowledge of a *sāsthrā* or proficiency in an art in such a manner as will ultimately remind you of the Lord.

If you take up linguistics you must try to seek the *Śabda-Brahman*. If it is music you must try to find fulfilment in the Nādha-Brahman. If you become involved in Tharka or research you must discover the reality of the *Paramāthman* to the extent it is possible. While learning gaṅitha or mathematics, you must be able to remind yourself about the immeasurable *Āthma-taththva* (Reality of the Āthman). The invocatory stanzas in the works of *Bhaskararāyā* and *Āryabhatā* show how they saw their subject as related to *Īśwarā*. When we study botany, biology or whatever, we are reminded of the Creator's marvelous work. If we study geography we will realize how he exhibits his lila or sport through the cosmos itself or in manifestations like the mountains, plateaux, rivers, deserts, different climates, etc. Astronomy will make us wonder about how he lords it over numberless worlds in the skies. In physics we will learn the laws of nature and through knowledge so gained we will be able to conform to the dharma of man. Whatever the subject we learn we must have an awareness of some aspects or other of the *Paramāthma-taththva*. We must also help others in getting such awareness. This is very important. Otherwise, it would mean that I have shown you the way for '*vidhyā*-garva' (being conceited about one's learning) which is worse than any other kind of vanity.

Be A Learner Not An Idler

'We face so many problems in life.' you will perhaps tell me as an excuse for not learning any of our traditional *śāsthrās*. 'We are on our toes working in the office or at home. You don't seem to realize all this and, sitting somewhere in a matha, you advice us to learn this and that. How is it possible for us?' If you have the will you will have the way to do anything. You say that you face so many problems in life. But don't you spend your time in gossip, in reading the papers, in seeing films and in playing cards? Half the time so wasted may be spent in public welfare work and the other half in learning. In this way some social work or other will also be done. Finally, while our *vidhyā*-s will be kept shining we too will receive the light of knowledge.

It will be asked: 'Shouldn't people who are exhausted by office work and are racked by family worries have some diversion?' If you try to learn a subject with a true interest and sincere involvement in it you will soon realize that there can be no better diversion. The *vidhyā* you have taken up will be a tonic for your fatigued mind. I am not asking you to give up your diversions. You do have them in any case. But think for yourself and try to give up such diversions as you yourself may feel are a waste of time. Learn a *swadēśi vidhyā* and become proficient in it. Such was the path followed by our forefathers.

Since we are born as humans we must acquire all that is possible through human knowledge and through that again try to go beyond the human plane. If we die without having tried to transcend the human level, our birth will be no more than that of a cow or a goat. The goat or the cow has to live in nature according to the dharma prescribed by *Īśwarā*. But it will be most unfortunate if those born as humans do not try to have their lives filled with light through the study of a *vidhyā* according to the dharma of higher knowledge received as a gift through the grace of the Lord. The Lord is above all knowledge and for His sake and for the sake of the Āthman one may forsake all knowledge and all *śāsthrās* and *vidhyā*-s on the plea. 'What is the need for all these?' But in our present (unenlightened) state, we cannot do so. If we do so it will be the puerile *Vēdhānthā* mouthed by the idler.

When Most People Were Vidvāns

There are inscriptions in villages dating from ancient times. In one of them the words '*asēshā*-vidvad-*jānā*' or '*asēshā*-vidvad-*mahājanā*' are seen. These words are also found in the 'Srimukhas' of our *Matā*. You probably know that '*Śēshā*' means 'the rest' or the 'remaining.' '*Asēshā*' means 'without anything remaining'. So the inscription means that without any exception all inhabitants in the village concerned were learned. We should not think that there is any exaggeration in this claim. The reason is that, even if people other than Brahmins did not go to any school, they were adepts in their respective occupations, trades or crafts. With regard to the first varña we understand that there were great pandits occupying the guru-*pītās* like our *Āchāryā*. In these days if you asked a man reputed to be a pandit to explain the meaning of a word from a *Vēdhā*; he would reply: 'Let me consult the *Bhāshya* (the commentary) and I will tell you.'

Age, Life Style No Bar To Learning

People who are asked to learn an art or a *śāsthrā* might ask : 'We have all these years been used to a certain way of life. How is it possible, all of a sudden now, to learn a *śāsthrā* or an art? Isn't there a proper age for everything? Isn't there a saying that which cannot be done at five cannot be done at fifty?' It is true that just as there is a proper age for various matters, there is an age for learning also. But if you do have any regret on the score that, though born in this country, you do not know even a single *śāsthrā* of ours you will really be able to learn at any age. The keenness of desire to know will itself give you the youthful enthusiasm and the capacity nessesary to grasp any subject.

If our life has been spent in a certain way, that 'certain way' may not have been the proper way. If we resolve that atleast thereafter we will lead our life in the manner in which we should have rightly led it all these years, we will obtain the enthusiasm and determination to change for the better.

The question 'whether it is possible to do something at fifty'. must be taken up as a challenge. You must be able to prove that it is possible. You should take it that the very purpose of the old saying is to provide a challenge that you can do what is considered not possible. Many have successfully shown this.

Apart from creating a new generation of students, old people must also study some *śāsthrā* themselves so that they may earn the good fortune of advancing to the stage of Brahma-*vidhyā*.

Not The State But People and S̄ishyas Responsible

In the olden days our kings were extremely erudite. Their courts were filled with learned people. The ruler helped the growth of *vidhyā* by giving donations or grants to the scholars. Today there is an education ministry as well as a cultural affairs ministry. We must appreciate the little bit that is done for cultural advancement. In a country inhabited by crores the government honours some ten panditas or so on Republic Day and it gives grants to a few Oriental schools. A couple of chairs are also instituted in our universities for our *śāsthrās* and festivals of rural arts are held for four or fives days every year. Now add up the amounts spent on all these. The sum will not be one-hundredth of the amount spent on economic planning, defence, irrigation, etc. Not a single political party is as much interested in education as it is in other matters. There is a lot of talk to project our cultural image in foreign countries but what is done in this respect is of no value since it is far removed from the divine basis of our culture and also not in keeping with the *śāsthrās*.

There must be an awakening in the matter of *vidhyā* among the public and among the disciples of the guru-*pītās*. It is their responsibility to work for the progress of the *śāsthrās*. In one sense, what is not done on a governmental level is all for the good because otherwise there would be greater indifference on this score among the people. When the government does nothing it is more likely that people will involve themselves whole-heartedly in preserving and propagating our traditional national *vidhyā*.

Support for half-knowledge

If you consider the real state of education today you will feel sad. The standards are declining day by day. One by one, the *śāsthrās* are dying out. So many arts have already passed into oblivion. The glow of fireflies (beetles) appears very bright in pitch-darkness. Similarly, if the occupant of a guru-*pītā* knows a little bit about the *śāsthrās* and *vidhyā*-s he is praised by his disciples as a 'sarvajna' (omniscient). And for his part he thinks that there is no need for him to learn any more.

Today's intellectual darkness is such that people with the gift of the gab glitter like fireflies. The glow of fireflies is made dim by the light shed by the galaxies, and the light shed by galaxies is bathed in the brighter light of the moon. And when the sun rises the moonlight is dispelled. Our progress in acquiring knowledge must be similar. Even today we have in our midst a few conversant with the *śāsthrās* and in the ancient arts. We have experts in Āyur Vēdhā, *śilpa-śāsthrā*, chariot-making, Bharata-*śāsthrā*, etc. But it is men of superficial knowledge, people who can create an impression with their glib talk, that earn respect. Showmen are honoured and what counts is political partisanship and caste even in matters like *vidhyā* and knowledge. So much so, it has become difficult for the true scholar to earn support and recognition. The showmen, men with the gift of the gab, people who can make a lot of noise with their half-knowledge, are able to write even on *Vēdhānthā* and win world fame. But nobody comes forward to publicise the works of people who are truly learned, people who have made a profound study of their subject and conducted inquiries into it. In today's, state of affairs all that is needed is showmanship and flamboyance. It seems there is no need for true merit. The reason for this is that knowledge about *śāsthrās* has declined to a deplorably low level. Though there are a number of people who are proficient in Western learning, the common man has no acquaintance with the traditional *vidhyā* of the land. The result is that people are unable to assess the worth of true knowledge, nor can they distinguish between true knowledge and half-knowledge. It is half-knowledge that glitters and it is persons with half-knowledge who win honour.

When few respect true knowledge, good scholars will feel downhearted and, in their disappointment, fail to pass on their knowledge to their children or other pupils. The result will be the eventual extinction of our *vidhyā*-s. This is already taking place now and the process must be stopped. That is the purpose of all my talk.

A request to Vidvāns :

It is my duty to make a request to men of learning. 'You must make sacrifices in the cause of education. Without paying regard to whether or not you are respected, you must get together a group of students and pass on to them your knowledge, your *vidhyā*. You must do it without minding the hardships that you might encounter.'

Ideal scholars :

In one or two places, I have come across families that have dedicated themselves to *vidhyā*, without caring for fame or money or honour. I have visited many places and seen many things but these families made me happy beyond measure.

In 1927-28 I was traveling in Kēralā. 1 There is a place called *Tiruvanchikaḻam* there. It was the capital of Kēralā in ancient times. Kulāsēkhara *Pērumāḻ* among the Azhwārs and Chēramān *Pērumāḻ* among the 63 Nayanmars - the word '*Perumāḻ*' occurs in the names of both royal devotees - reigned from *Tiruvanchikaḻam*. Of the places mentioned in the *Thēvāram* (Tamil šaiva hymns) - 'places that have been celebrated in song' -

there is just one in the Malayalam-spseaking area and it is *Triuvanchikaḻam*. However, in this land there are thirteen of the 108 divine places of which the Āzhwārs have sung. There is a famous Bhagavati temple near *Tiruvanchikaḻam*, in Kodungalūr. It was here that I saw a number of scholars learned in a variety of *śāsthrās* - they cared not for the recognition of the outside world.

It was before 1930 that I saw this place in Kēralā. About 40 years later (November 1968) I came across people similarly learned, this time, in the Telugu region. And it was not an entire place but just one big family of learned members. I was delighted to see them and I said to myself almost in wonder: 'Could there be a family in which every members is learned in one *śāsthrā* or another?'

This family of five brothers, in Ippūr near Tenali, are called 'Hari-sōdarulu', I saw them at their house in Bezwada (now Vijayavada). The oldest brother was called Hari Venkatasubbayya. The brothers had learned the *śāsthrās* according to the ancient system and each had specialized in one subject like the *Vēdhās*, *Vēdha Bhāshya*, the Smruthis, *Purāṅās*, etc. They had got together their knowledge of these subjects into books.

This is not what made them really great. Anxious that the wealth of *vidhyā* they had acquired should not go waste, they had taught the *śāsthrās* to their children. This is what I regard as significant. When the children of the family were five years old they started learning Sanskrit. Instead of tying them down to books, they were taught to speak in simple Sanskrit. It was a matter of joy for me to listen to these boys of seven or eight speak in Sanskrit.

In the old days there were places known for all their inhabitants, including women, being learned ('*aśēshā*-vidvad-*janā*'). Stories are told of women who wiped the countryards of their houses with cowdung and at the same time reeled off passages from Sanskrit. The pandits who came here to hold debates with their local counterparts fled when they learned about such women. There are also stories of parakeets which debated among themselves on *Tharka-śāsthrā* (logic). There is perhaps just a trickle of this tradition remaining in our country in one or two places, a mere 'sample' as it were of old times.

Vidhyā, promoted by scholars as worship of *Īśwarā* and without any consideration of reward, will somehow become imbued with life and grow. *Īśwarā* will help them by showing them the way to sustain themselves. There were many such scholars in the past. It was not only that supreme devotee, Tyagaraja, who spurned royal favours. So many other great *vidvāns* did not hanker after wealth, recognition and honour. One must exert oneself not only to become a scholar but also learn to become humble.

For the Future :

My statement that men of learning should not be engaged in the scramble for money or honour does not mean that they should be confined to a corner without recognition or that they should be starved. Just as a scholar must try to promote learning by making sacrifices, others must place before themselves the ideal of sacrificing at least a bit of their time and money to preserve our heritage of *vidhyā*. In other words they must look for the *vidvāns*, those who are learned in our ancient arts and *śāsthrās* and help in their financial and social uplift. They must also bring some students together who will study under them so that their learning will be passed on to future generations.

Make It Part of Life

Even now research is being carried out in our old *śāsthrās*. But it is done at a purely academic level without any connection with life as lived in our society. Reading papers, writing theses; conducting seminars and symposiums; arranging discussions by a few people who have been chosen as 'scholars', publishing costly books costing Rs.100 or Rs.200 (these books later gather dust in the shelves); holding functions to release books in which ministers and high court judges lecture on our culture; writing lengthy reviews in newspapers - so goes the list of activities nowadays. What purpose do they serve? The speeches and writings are forgotten not long after they are made or printed. Those who take pains on behalf of our old *vidhyā*-s in the present set-up and conduct research and seminars and bring out publications must be congratulated. But one cannot help pointing out that their work does not have any enduring value. It does not take root in the community and is soon forgotten. The study of our *śāsthrās* should be made an integral part of the very life of our society. Only through the establishment of the guru-*śishyā* parampara in which one's inner being and way of life are interwoven can such a goal be achieved.

If our *śāsthrās* are to be truly preserved, publishing books on them and stocking them in libraries would serve no purpose. Even if such books were to be read and research conducted in the same manner as now with the further publication of books, no lasting purpose would be served. Mere book knowledge might lead to mistakes being committed in life and might have undesirable consequences. The subjects which have evolved according to the *āchārā* of our country must be taught according to the system developed in conformity with this *āchārā*. The purpose of such teaching should be to help students control their senses, inculcate discipline and other noble qualities and develop devotion to *Īswarā*. Only then will it bring benefits to the taught and ultimately result in the well-being of the entire nation.

Gurukulavāsā in all Fields

There is nothing better than the gurukula system to accomplish the task described above. If we adhere to it in its true form and if we succeed in obtaining from the guru both knowledge and grace. We will be able to rid ourselves of all our shortcomings. Even secular education could be conducted in this way with the help of retired teachers or professors. The students must reside with them and serve them and appear for examinations privately. Just pretend that your children failed just once (in their regular school) and send them for *gurukulavāsā* for one year or so and give the guru the necessary help for it. Or try the gurukula method at least during the summer vacation of two months. I have been speaking in this vein for years. The next best thing is to bring together a number of students under a group of gurus in residential schools and give instruction to them according to the *śāsthrās*.

I have spoken at susch length about gurukulās and *ghatikāsthānās* in the hope that you will choose either of the two systems of education and serve the cause of our national *vidhyā*.

May Ambā Shower Her Blessings

Ambā must bless you so that at least a little bit of what I have told you is retained in your mind. *Āchāryā* observes in his commentary on the Kēnōpanishad that Ambā, who is united with the omniscient *Īśwarā*, shines as the very personification of *vidhyā*, the most luminous of all lights. She must pervade our minds and inspire us all to preserve our ancient *vidhyā*-s. Her grace alone can turn our mind away from the goal of money, wealth towards *vidhyā*. The light of *vidhyā* that illumined this country all these ages is now dim and we are enveloped in darkness. *Āchāryā* who says *vidhyā* is the greatest of all lights, concludes his commentary thus 'it is not that Uma-Paramēśwari alone who, shining with *vidhyā*, has acquired the name of Haimavathi. Whoever earns *vidhyā* and becomes a *vidvān* will obtain thējas, luster, through that very *vidhyā*.'

We could give two meanings to the word 'Haimavathi' used in this context in the Upanishad (Kēnō) for Ambā. 'Hima' means snow and since Uma was born the daughter of the snow-mountain Himavan the goddess is Haimavati. That which connotes 'hima' is 'haima!'. 'Hēma' means gold. She who shines like gold is Haimavathi. Since the Upanishad says that Uma has 'bahu-śōbha' it would be proper to construe that she shines with the luster of gold. According to *Āchāryā* it is because she is the form of *vidhyā* that she is effulgent. While concluding his *Vākya Bhāshya*, the *Āchāryā* observes: 'A *vidvān* , even if he is ugly in physical features shines with great luster. *('Virūpō (a) pi vidhvāvan bahu-śōbhathē).* We say looking at learned people of virtuous conduct and character. 'Look at the luster on his face. What fine look of learning he has.' Similarly, we are able to make out an idler too from his face.

To go back to the imagery of pedaling the bicycle: Owing to the light of *vidhyā* acquired by our forefathers, the faces of a few people today are still bright. It is the compassion of Ambā which keeps the bicycle from stopping. May she make everyone's face bright and spread the light of knowledge throughout the land.

⁂

PUBLIC LIFE

THE REMARKABLE ELECTION SYSTEM OF UTHTHARAMĒRŪR

Aspects of Democracy in Vēdhās Also

Our general impression about the ancient form of government is that it didn't let the general public have any say, leaving all the authority exclusively to the king. By 'king', we don't mean just that single individual, but we tend to include all the prominent members of his cabinet as well. We think that the king and his family members, along with the ministers and high level officials, made all the decisions in these old government systems and then executed them through various authorities. A few people go even further in this line of thinking, influenced by the subtle conditioning of the western historians in the name of research. They are of the opinion that the brahmins were keeping these kings under their thumb and controlled everything in a manner that would maintain their dominance, having the run of the place according to their whims.

There is the general perception that democracy, which allows the general public to have a share in the governance, is a concept that became known to us only through the westerners.

The reality, however, is that even from the *vēdhic* period onwards, the ruling of a kingdom was conducted in such a way as to provide room for the opinions of all of its subjects. *Vēdhās* mention three kinds of organizations called '*sabhā*', 'samithi', and 'vidhathā'. Under these auspices, learned people seemed to have gathered together and made decisions after discussing the administrative affairs, and only in accordance to these decisions did the king rule. Even the western historians agree that these organizations did not seem to be confined to the brahmins or kshathriyas alone; instead, they seem to be organized in such a way that all social divisions were represented.

There is the *sthōthrā* (hymn) called Rudhram, which is recited while performing an *abhishēkam*, with repeated incantations of '*Namō Namah*'. It comes in the *Vēdhās*, specifically, in the *Thaithirīya samhithā* part of the *Yajur Vēdhā*. These *manthrās* enumerate each and every animate and inanimate object of this world and pay *namaskāram* (obeisance) to it by adding the incantation of '*Namō Namah*' to each such enumeration. This is for the reason that the all-pervading *Paramāthmā*, by definition, can be found in each and every one of these objects. While describing everything as a form of *Śivā*, it says, '*namaskārams* to all *sabhās*; *namaskārams* to all *Sabhā Pathis*' with the added '*Namō Namah*' for these entities. Here, the objects that it refers to as '*sabhā*' and '*Sabhā Pathi*' correspond to none other than the aforementioned people's *sabhā*, set up for conducting the state affairs, and its *agrāsanar* (presiding official), respectively.

Currently, we do have various *sabhās*, of which, music *sabhā* is the most prominent. When someone says, 'I am going to the *sabhā*', we interpret it to mean that he is going to a concert. However, during the *vēdhic* period, the same kind of unqualified reference to '*sabhā*' would mean an organization akin to the present legislative assembly.

This *sabhā* was considered worthy of *namaskāram* in Rudhram because of the notion that a *sabhā* created by the collective effort of several learned people with the intention of doing good things for the people, must indeed be a form of *Īswarā* Himself.

In Chidambaram, where the *Paramāthmā* has taken an *Ārchā Rūpam* (Idol form) as His full manifestation, his sannidhi (sanctum) is also called *sabhā* (Kanaka (golden) *Sabhā*). In addition to this Kanaka *Sabhā*, there are four other *Sabhās* for this Chakravarthi (emperor) of the three worlds, who is reigning on the animate and inanimate objects of all these worlds, making them dance to His tune while He Himself dances. They are the Rajatha (silver) *Sabhā* in Madurai, the rathna (ruby) *Sabhā* in *Thiruvālangādu*, the *Thāmra* (copper) *Sabhā* in Thirunelveli, and the Chithra (painted art) *Sabhā* in *Thirukkutrālam*, filled simply with painting and no sculptures. He is the presiding speaker, the *Sabhā Pathi*, for all these *sabhās*. Well, not really the 'speaker'; He is the 'dancer'!

Though we refer to Him as '*Natarāja*' (Dancing king) in general, in written notes about the temple in Chidambaram, the *Dhīkshitars* usually refer to the temple as *'Sabhā Nāyakar Kōil'* (temple of the Lord of *sabhā*). *Īśwarā* is not only the *Sabhā* Nāyaka or *Sabhā Pathi*, but He is one and the same as the *Sabhā* itself. It is for enlightening us with this fact that this *sabhā* is also given *namaskāram* in the Srī Rudhram, a *vēdhic* recitation. The beliefs such as 'Will of the people is the will of God' are not something that we have acquired just recently. This mention in Srī Rudhram is evidence that bolsters the fact that such concepts have been in existence ever since the *vēdhic* period, aeons ago.

We learn from the *Vēdhās* that members of these *sabhās*, who debate and discuss the affairs of the state, must possess three qualities: good intellect, matching exemplary conduct, and skillful articulation, essential for clearly presenting a point of view. *Vēdhās* contain several *manthrās* seeking these qualities in prayer form. We are well aware that rishis are exalted in intellect as well as conduct. Some of them, impelled by the desire to be of service to the government and for the welfare of the people, have also sought the power of good articulation so that they could become members of these *sabhās* to fulfill their desire. There are some *manthrās* that the rishis invoke to specifically request articulation: 'we seek the power to speak eloquently in the *sabhā* called vidhathā'.

Rudhram, the one that mentions the *sabhā* and *Sabhā Pathi*, comes in *Yajur Vēdhā*. There is another set of five hymns glorifying *Īswarā*, collectively referred to as 'Pancha Rudhra', which comes in *Rig Vēdhā*. A prayer for these qualities is also specified in this Pancha Rudhram. It mentions that only a person who is outstanding in intellect, character, and articulation is a '*sabhēyan*', one who is worthy of becoming a member in the *sabhā*. Referring to someone as '*sabhēyan*' is enough to automatically accord him the recognition that he possesses all three qualities: the power of character, of intellect and of speech. There are *manthrās* that indicate that it is not enough for a king to become one first by birth; he must also be a *sabhēyan*.

At the very end of *Rig Vēdhā*, there is a *Vēdha sūktham* (hymn) that instructs *sabhēyās* how to take decisions after debates and careful analysis of the people's welfare and how they should execute it (the decisions) in a unified manner. This has received much praise by the intellectuals, who even exclaim, 'How beautiful are these expositions found in the *Vēdhās*, the very first literary piece of this world! We might as well keep this as the motto for the United Nations.' Following is the instruction given by this *sūktha*: Get together. Conduct open-minded discussions. Let all your thoughts concur in recognizing the people's welfare and the welfare of the world as the sole aim. Towards this singular goal, work with a high mind and become united in your hearts, find the collective bliss through mental harmony .'

The country's administration was conducted only through such *sabhās* that had representation from the various social groups. It is not at all correct to claim that the brahmin *purōhiths* (priests) dictated the law. Just on par with the *purōhiths*, several other castes of people such as *grāmaṇī* and *sēnāni* were also mentioned as important officials in government undertakings. It seems that *grāmaṇī* is the official that looked after the affairs of the village life, or civil matters, and *sēnāni* that of military matters. *Sēnāni* is definitely not a brahmin; he is indeed a kshathriya. *Grāmaṇi*, a social group that exists even today, is not of a brahmin caste. Unless it existed in the same form originally, it couldn't have become one now.

A careful analysis of the *Vēdhā manthrās* pertaining to the coronation rituals reveals that the one receiving the coronation was accepted as king by each and every social division and was proclaimed as such. We can perhaps claim that in some sense, this is a fusion of monarchy and democracy, going hand in hand.

Caste Head

Another aspect of democracy that has been in practice right from the ancient days is the way in which each caste governed its own collective life. This was done independently through a leader called *nāttāṇmai*, in addition to the part each of these castes played a larger roll in governing the affairs of the entire kingdom.

'*Kula*' refers to affairs with respect to a single family; *rashtra* or janapatha refers to that of an entire kingdom (there is also another interpretation wherein janapatha refers to affairs of the rural areas); there is another category called *'srēṇi'* that is in between these two levels. *'Srēṇi'* pertains to affairs with respect to a particular occupation. The community that we call '*chēṇiar*', the ones who are in the weaving profession, is derived from this *'srēṇi'* only. Among the various *srēṇi's* (somewhat similar to guilds), these weaver *srēṇi's* seems to have been especially noteworthy for their discipline and sense of belonging. Thus, the term '*srēṇi*' itself has come to denote them as a special recognition.

I just mentioned some of these details to show you that various forms of government, which had elements of 'democracy', 'republic', 'self-governance', etc., existed in our land all the way back during a very ancient time - the time when western society, the current pioneers of modern civilization, was yet to be initiated into the civilization process. A citizen of our country didn't stop with just being merely ruled, but was himself an active participant in that very ruling process starting from those ancient days.

Qualification is Essential

Administration of a kingdom is a serious business and a complex one, too. The task of managing a kingdom, providing security to a large population, enacting laws for them, ensuring that these laws are obeyed, etc., requires a high level of education, analytical skills, cleverness in execution, and worldly experience. Managing even a small household seems to be quite a task. Imagine the complexity of managing a whole kingdom! If a large portion of the general public seems to be lacking in the skill to run even a household, what would happen if they were given direct responsibility for running the country?

Therefore, it is not prudent for everyone to take part directly in ruling the country.

It has to be conducted through a select few who possess the necessary qualifications.

King as the Head of State

Those who are involved in the administration must have discipline. Therefore, a leader is necessary to enforce this discipline. The subjects, in order to have a feeling of strong national identity, also need something beyond just the geographic components of the country such as its soil, mountains, and rivers; they need a live symbol of the country as a catalyst to develop a strong love, devotion, and loyalty towards it.

To satisfy both of these requirements, someone needs to be the head of the state. They designated a 'king' to fulfill this role. They kept this post to be one of dynastic succession, since only then was it possible to start the appropriate training right from birth, which would prepare him to acquire all the qualifications that are necessary for this seat of leadership. Hence royalty was designated to be hereditary. In addition to whatever he acquires through the training, the ability to acquire other regal aspects and poise through proper background, environment, and the inborn character traits in his blood are all possible only in this hereditary system.

It was ordained that he shouldn't just act according to the whims of his own mind, but should accept the already existing *Dharma śāsthrās*, *artha śāsthrās*, and *nīthi śāsthrās* (jurisprudence); he was required to rule only according to their guidelines and within their constraints. He had to consult the opinions of the *raja* guru (the royal preceptor), the ministers, and intellectuals through the various advisory *sabhās* where these people served as members and rule only according to their recommendations.

Head of Town

In addition to this arrangement for the entire kingdom, a separate local administration was set up to look after the needs of the people within each locality. If each of these localities had its own king, it would jeopardize the uniting force of a nation and the consequent respect that is the rightful due of the national royal throne. Though people do need the freedom to govern themselves on a local basis for their personal affairs, a central authority is very essential for several reasons. It needs to make sure that one locality's actions do not affect another is subjects, ensure that the local *sabhās* function in a cooperative manner, attend to affairs that pertain to the entire nation, and protect them from enemies by using the military. This central authority certainly needs the king as its head. Patriotism is fostered through the king as a symbolic presence for a nation; no such need exists in the case of a locality.

This is because a local town has a much closer feel for its subjects. The feeling of 'our town' and the attachment to it come quite naturally as opposed to the feeling of 'our country'.

Self-interest comes first; then comes the family; next is local town, and only after this comes the country. The elders suggest broadening the mind further to add 'our world' next. In common practice, the country comes only after the local town. This is human nature. Bonding with the native town develops so easily since it contains the familiarity of the day-to-day experiences of its rivers, ponds, temples, fields, market place, and people of everyday encounters. The country, on the other hand, which is expansive with unfamiliar people and unfamiliar places, is not conducive for the development of such an attachment. The point that I am arriving at is that unlike the need for a king at the national level as its living symbol in order to create attachment to it, the local town, which its people are naturally attached to, doesn't need such a living representation in its administration.

Nonetheless, an administrative body does need a head of its own. So a local *sabhā* also needs such a head. However, this head doesn't need any extraordinary image. Nor does he have great responsibilities like the king of the central authority. The leadership seat of a local body does not involve such a complex level of responsibilities as to have a need for training right from birth to acquire the necessary qualifications. This local head, as a subordinate to the central king and under the constraints of this king's authority and supervision, should simply attend to the local matters. Therefore, a right of succession is not necessary for this. In fact, when the authority is so limited, making it hereditary would actually lead the way for assigning responsibility to people who don't qualify for it. A prince would work hard with utmost concern and attention to earn the qualifications when he realized the magnitude of his responsibility - ruling a vast land mass and its large population and thwarting enemy invasions while doing everything in a manner that would earn him respect. In contrast, the local head could feel complacent with the casual familiarity of the people. This, together with the reduced responsibility, the feeling of entitlement, and the guarantee of 'Oh, this is hereditary; no one else can come and compete' might keep him from the bother of having to work hard to earn the qualifications, right? It is for reasons such as these that the local administration was not designated as hereditary.

For the entire country, the king had to rule with the assistance of the advisory *sabhās*; for a local town, an administrative *sabhā*, under a head, had to carry out its actions. This was the way it was set up. Let us look at the difference between these two arrangements. The king had the ultimate authority. The *sabhās* only gave him their recommendations. The king made the final decision. Local administration was quite different from this. The *sabhā* carried out the administration's duties in addition to coming up with the recommendation. This body itself made the decisions. Even so, for organizational order, the rule of several unconnected officials without a head wouldn't be suitable. Realizing this need for a head to keep the various members in check and disciplined, the *sabhā* did have a head.

Membership in Local Sabhā by Election

The government administration was run jointly by the king, his advisors, and the *sabhā* members of all the localities.

Could the other positions on the advisory *sabhā* and the local *sabhās* be filled with anybody? Of course, not! Governance of a local town as well as the country is a complex matter. Though less complex than the country's administration, the local administrations had their own share of complexities and responsibilities. So this set up also called for delegating these responsibilities only to those who were duly qualified and then being placed on these *sabhās*.

It was in this placement process for the local *sabhās* that they followed a system of an election process. The election system was such that it could make the people feel part of the process and feel happy about it.

The process of 'election', the bench mark of present day democracy, its life breath, was existent during the *Chōḻā's* regime itself. Though both are elections, I want to show how these two systems differed and the old system was superior to the current system.

In the case of a kingdom, when a prince came up for coronation, the elders belonging to his father's cabinet, who were assisting him, would counsel the prince also and lead him in the right path. Later, by the time they retire from their posts the king would have gained enough management experience and maturity to be able to select his advisors and appoint them.

The *sabhā* members who undertake the local administration must also be qualified. However, instead of being appointed by the king or by some royal official, there was a process which made the people feel 'that they had a share, a true participation, in this; they shouldn't have resentment that someone was appointed under some outsider's order. There was such an election system in the *Chōḻā's* rule.

But, did they leave it all to the general public to elect their own representatives as the members of the *sabhā*?'

Republic and Democracy

At the present time (1949), this is the precise method that has been decided upon, not only for the local regions, but for all the states and the entire country as well. When the country becomes a republic, all the citizens have to vote for members of the parliament and the assemblies, elect these representatives, and then have them run the government.

Being a republic doesn't mean all the people can be given direct responsibility and position in the government. Only a few people, as their representatives, should form the government and run it. There are several ways in which this can be implemented. Among many such forms of governments, that which is run by the representatives of the entire population, not restricted to any single category, is called a democracy. Such a democracy has been chosen as the form of our republican government. Considering all the circumstances we might say that no other arrangement is viable.

Difference of Opinion

Let the government be formed up in such a manner that all sections are represented in it. However, there is some difference of opinion about the proposal to let all adult citizens vote and elect such representatives is. However, the number of people who express such a difference is really small. Therefore, considering the general consensus of the whole nation, this difference of opinion appears minor.

We do have to admit, however, that even among knowledgeable people, there exist several selfish ones, who put their personal interest above the interests of the nation and vote accordingly. Still, there is greater possibility of having a secure and better government if such a responsibility is entrusted with the knowledgeable people rather than with the illiterate common folk. Or, it may be lesser of two evils.

Election Method with Strange Aspect

Elders in the ancient times of the *Chōḻā* regime had thought about all these issues. Therefore, when they determined that the local *sabhā* members should be brought in through election rather than be appointed by the royal authority, they saw that it wouldn't work out well if this was determined through the votes of all the people. Nevertheless, they also seem to have thought that restricting voting rights only to qualified people would create discord among the local constituents, who might feel that they were of higher or lower status, and cause cracks in society.

Considering all these, they established a method of election in which voting was done neither by a select few nor all the people.

Chōḻā Dynasty

During the third and fourth century B.C., when the history of *Tamil Nādu* begins according to modern day researchers, the dynasties of *Chēra*, *Chōḻā*, and *Paṅdiyās*, referred to as three-kings ('mūvēndar'), were in power. Even literature of the *Sangam* period alludes to the greatness of several *Chōḻā* kings. Those who were famous according to the *purāṅās* are Muchu*kuṅda* Chakravarthy (emperor), who ruled with Tiruvarur as his capital, and others such as *Manu Nīthi Chōḻā.* Those who were renowned historically among the old *Chōḻā* kings were *Karikāla Chōḻā* and *Kōchengat Chōḻā*.

The *Chōḻā* Empire, which flourished during those days, was later crippled, giving rise to the expansion of the Pallava dynasty from the fifth century A.D., which then became dominant. In the middle of the ninth century, during the time of *Vijayālaya Chōḻā*, the *Chōḻā* dynasty was restored and expanded with each coming generation and became a great empire during the reign of *Rāja Rājā* and *Rājēndhra*, excelling in all sectors of administration. For the following four hundred years or so, this Later *Chōḻā* dynasty flourished with great renown.

Stone Inscription Regarding Election

This election that I was talking about is known to have taken place during the reign of *Parānthakā Chōḻā*, who came to the throne after *Vijayālaya*. A thousand-year-old stone inscription (920 A.D.) contains elaborate and interesting details about it. This inscription is in *Uththaramērūr*, near *Kānchīpuram*; it is also known as *Pērūr*.

The details found in this *śāsanā* (charter) don't pertain to an election for choosing representatives at the level of parliament or state, which enact legislation for the whole country or a large subdivision. In the government system of the *Chōḻā* kings, there were several *sabhās*, set up for attending to the affairs of each local region, similar to the present day local bodies of city councils and village *panchayats*. This *śāsanā* pertains to the election of representatives for these local *sabhās*.

Divisions of the Kingdom

The *Chōḻā* kingdom was divided into various administrative divisions similar to the present *jillah*, *taluka*, and *firka*. Actually, similar divisions were existing in our country even in ancient times. In *Chōḻā* kingdom, the biggest such division was called a 'mandalam'. Inside these 'mandalam's, the next level of division was 'vayanadu', consisting of eighteen localities. Within 'vayanadu', there were '*kūtram*', followed by 'kottam', and then finally, the smallest division called 'oor'. Most often, 'oor' was a village. In those days, when agriculture was more prominent than commerce, urban towns were very few. Actually, the villages outshone these towns. *Uththaramērūr* was one such village but not small. We gather from inscriptions that *Uththaramērūr* was a large area consisting of thirty-two divisions, each of which was equivalent to the current 'ward', an electoral division of our current townships.

Such a village had a *nāttāṉmai* (head) for each caste or kind of occupation, based on the *vēdhic* organization of *śrēṇi* that I mentioned earlier. Among these, the organizational entity that took care of the affairs of the businessmen was called 'nagaram' in *Tamil Nādu.* That is why the residents of the area called *Nāttukkōttai* in Ramanathapuram district, where the business community is predominant, are all called 'nagaratthar'. Similarly, in the ancient Tamil country, an unqualified mention of *sabhā* implied a *sabhā* where the brahmins discussed, debated, and made decisions on affairs pertaining specifically to their community. Unlike these specialized setups, the organizational body that served all the castes and attended to the general matters that were of interest to the entire locality such as agriculture, irrigation, etc. was also called 'oor'. This organization consisted of members from all the castes. It was also called 'oor *sabhā*', '*grāma sabhā*', or '*grāma mahā sabhā*'. Details of the election process of such a *grāma mahā sabhā* of *Uththaramērūr* are revealed by two stone inscriptions.

Structure of Grāma Sabhā

Each *'oor'* was divided into several 'kudumbu' just as our towns are divided into several wards these days. This type of division into *kudumbu* of a *'oor'* is cited even in Adhithya *Chōḻā's* stone inscription found in a place called *Chandhralēkhā Chathurvēdhi* Mangalam or *Sendhalai*, dating fifty years prior to the *Uththaramērūr* inscriptions. The *grāma mahā sabhā* was set up to have a representative from each one of those *kudumbus*. These representatives, the members of these *grāma sabhās*, were chosen by election and not appointed by a royal authority or administrative body. The noteworthy aspect is that the membership in these *sabhās* was neither hereditary, nor a government appointment; it was an elected one.

This was a kind of an election by the people in which something resembling a ballot was used. However, it wasn't an election wherein each and every individual voter cast a ballot. This will be discussed later.

Details About the Stone Inscriptions

In addition to the inscriptions from *Uththaramērūr*, descriptions of how members of these *sabhās* were elected are available in several other copper and stone inscriptions found in the southern districts.

There is a village called Thalai Jnāyiru in Māyavaram *Taluka*, where there is a *Siva* temple with the deity having benevolent name of *'Kutram Porutthīśwarār'* (meaning, '*Īśwarā*, who forgives wrong'). A stone inscription of the *Chōḻā* age in this temple contains details of *oor* government. The message in this is somewhat like; 'an individual may plead for forgiveness to the *Bhagawān* for any misconduct relating to his own personal life, but he must exhibit absolutely flawless conduct in public life.' This contains a list of eligibility requirements, quite similar to the one in *Uththaramērūr* for being elected. Some of these requirements are: Those above a certain age, those who have not served in the *sabhā* for a certain number of years in the past, those who do not have relatives who served in the *sabhā* for a certain numbers of years in the past', etc.

Several such stone and copper inscriptions belonging to the time of Utthama *Chōḻā*, Sundhara *Chōḻā*, *Rāja Rājā-I*, *Rājēndhra-I*, *Kulōthunga-I*, and several others have been found. The 'Anbil Plates' and 'Leyden Plates' also contain such details. But the most important one that gives an exhaustive account is the one in *Uththaramērūr*.

Actually, there are two inscriptions in *Uththaramērūr*. One follows the other after a gap of two years. The first one is concise. It is the later one that is very detailed and has attained popularity. What has been touched upon in bits and pieces in other inscriptions is described in complete detail only in this second inscription (dated 920 AD) belonging to the time of *Parānthakā Chōḻā*.

If any irregularities or slackness came to light in a public undertaking of a particular place, the *Chō̱lā* king (or for that matter, any king) would send appropriate officials to conduct an inquiry and set them right. Following this practice a thousand years ago, the *Chō̱lā* king named Vīra *Nārāyaña Parānthaka Dēva Parakēsari Varmā*, whom we call *Parānthakā* for short, apparently sent an official to *Uththaramērūr* and two years later, he again sent another official there, in order to set right the election procedures. The respective arrangements that these two officials made are the ones that are revealed by these two inscriptions. It appears that the election rules devised by the governing *sabhā* of this village were supervised by these officials and then duly approved.

Brāhmin Vē̱lā̱la Officials

Of these two officials, the one whose name ends with *Vē̱lā̱la* obviously belongs to the *Vē̱lā̱la* caste. All three words of 'Sōmāsi', 'Kramaviddhan', and 'Bhattan' of the other name denote brahmin. A 'Sōmayaji' is one who must have completed a Sōma yāgā and has become 'Sōmāsi' in Tamil.

What does 'Kramaviddhan' mean? The *vēdhic* verses, which are required to be only listened to and recited but not to be written down, must never be recited with even the slightest of distortions. Such a distortion will jeopardize the very power of its manthra. That is why the *rishis* have devised a way to determine the true original form with absolute certainty by teaching the same *manthra* sequences in various different orders and combinations. In this process of varying the *Vēdhā aksharas* (syllables) in several different ways, several methods called varña*m*, kramam, *jata*, *ghanam*, etc. are applied. 'Ghanam' is the most advanced one - a very intricate weaving of the syllables. You know some people are called 'Ghanapati'? They are none other than those who have attained mastery up to the level of 'ghanam'. 'Jatavallabhar' means, 'one who has mastered up to the 'jata' stage. Similarly, 'kramvidh' is one who has mastered up to the level of 'k*Rāmā*m'. In Tamil he is called 'Kramaviddhan'. From the numerous references to 'Kramaviddhar's in the inscriptions of the three dynasties of *Tamil Nādu* (*Chēra*, *Chōḻā*, and Pandiya), it can be inferred that there were a large number of brahmins who did *Vēdhā adhyāyana* in those days.

'Bhattan' is also a term that is very similar to the current 'Aiyer', 'Sasthri', 'Sarma', etc. According to *śāsthrās*, a brahmin should be referred to as 'Śarma', a *kshathriya* as '*Varmā*', a Vaisyā as 'Guptha', and the fourth varṅa as 'Dasa'. However, in the olden days, 'Bhattan' was a more commonly used reference for a brahmin. As a matter of fact, the 'Bhattōji' of *Mahārāshtra*, 'Bhat' of Mangalore, and the Bengali 'Bhattāchāryā' are all brahmins.

It is particularly noteworthy that a *Vēḻāḻa*, belonging to the fourth varṅa, as well as a Bhattan, belonging to the first varṅa, were both serving as important officials.

Qualifications of Candidates

In the *Uththaramērūr* inscriptions a whole list of qualifications of candidates of the oor sabhā is given.

1. He must own at least one quarter *vēli* (a measure for area) of land that is taxable.
2. He must own a house built on his own land.
3. The first inscription says that he should not be older than sixty, nor should he be younger than thirty. The second one, which had been revised after two years, has increased these limits to seventy from sixty and to thirty-five from thirty.

Another aspect that comes out of this is that they did not simply hold on to a rule once it was enacted. Every now and then they seemed to have subjected these rules to review, and if there was scope for refinement, they made the necessary amendments.

Rules Subject to Amendments and Rules Not Subject to Amendments

While on the subject of amendments, we need to take note of another aspect. Certain rules and laws might have been enacted at a certain time by a group of good people whose only consideration was the welfare of the country. These rules and laws might face the danger of being amended later by people with no such noble qualities and motivated by self-interest.

The remarkable aspect of those times is that basically all our kingdoms were run according to the *Dharma Śāsthrās* , in a similar way as the constitutions are currently used as guidelines. Among the various *Dharma śāsthrās* , the one that details all matters with great clarity and elegance is the Manu *Dharma Śāsthrā*. This is the one that seems to have been followed by all the kings, according to the *'praśasthis'* (glorious citations about kings given in official *śāsanās*) and other literature, epics, etc. The phrase 'Manu *nīthi* vazhuvāthu' (meaning 'without deviating even slightly from Manu's laws') is used to describe all these kings' rules. This leads us to conclude that these kings never changed the rules found in the law book of Manu consisting of the essence of all the *Dharma Śāsthrās* devised by the *rishis*, bearing no self-interest whatsoever. For this fundamental set of rules, there *is* no amendment; these rules were preserved without any distortion to their original form.

To identify the principles of dharma and to establish a way for the society to adhere to these principles, Manu *Dharma Śāsthrā* divided the society into several categories and specified rules to keep these categories functioning in tandem, and cooperating with each other. It is named *Dharma Śāsthrā* and not *political Śāsthrā*.

It was written solely for the purpose of establishing dharma both at the level of the nation as a whole, as well as the level of each individual citizen. This *śāsthrā* points out that the very duty of a king and his government is to establish dharma. The ancient people considered politics as just one part of that duty.

Artha *Śāsthrā* and Śukra Nīthi, the works that were composed later, though primarily focused on politics, were also mostly in accordance with *Dharma śāsthrās* . These royal *nīthi śāsthrās* did leave room for relaxing the rules of *Dharma Śāsthrās* slightly with regard to a few aspects, accommodating practical conveniences and considerations. However, even in those circumstances, the stipulation was that such a relaxation should be accommodated in a way that it didn't harm the basic foundation of *Dharma Śāsthrās*, similar to upholding the basic structure of a constitution. Where such a potential deviation from *Dharma śāsthrās* was encountered, the verdict of the scholars was that it should be rejected in favour of the tenets of the *Dharma Śāsthrās*. *Dharma Śāsthrā*, being one of the four *śāsthrās* that are part of the fourteen branches of knowledge, takes precedence over Artha *Śāsthrā*, which is only a part of the *upavēdhās*, placed below the fourteen primary branches of knowledge. Conforming to this noble policy, the kings of the land of Tamils proclaimed that they are the followers of the path laid out by the Manu *Nīthi Śāsthrā* and not that of the Artha *Śāsthrā*.

The reason why I brought this up is to show that during the regime of the Tamil kings, there was some leeway for amending the laws, but changing the laws to suit the whims and conveniences of the ruling people in the name of amendment was not sanctioned. Instead, it was mandated that the fundamental tenets of the *Dharma Śāsthrā* should be protected intact. Considering the regal setup as a tree supported by the *Dharma Śāsthrā* as its roots, the new laws were enacted only as additional branches accommodating the prevailing practicalities without affecting the root in any way whatsoever. Just as trimming branches and occasionally pruning one or two entirely are necessary, it was also necessary to amend the new laws in similar fashion.

One such act was the revision of the age criterion, the third qualification for the members of the *grāma mahā sabhā* in the *Chōḻā* rule.

Knowledge of Sāsthrā and Ability To Act

The fourth qualification was that the candidates must possess knowledge of *Vaidhīka Dharma*. They must be well versed in our *sāsthric* injunctions. They must be well educated.

Another aspect is emphasized along with this qualification. We see several instances in which great scholars and experts on *sāsthrās* lack is effective action, The *sāsanās* mandated that these people should not only be *vidhwāns* (scholars) but also be effective executives.

The Heart and Soul of Qualification: Purity of Wealth and Purity of Self

From the first two requirements, we learned that the *sabhā* members must possess some property. Now, a clause has been added that such property must not have been earned through wrong means, and even after becoming members of the *sabhā*, they must continue to not earn through wrong means.

Such a *dharmic* fening was established for material wealth. Going beyond material wealth, it required that the candidates have high moral standards in all aspects and to have accumulated their spiritual wealth as well. They had to retain this wealth even after being elected and becoming members of the *sabhā*.

Shall not Serve Contiguous Terms

These elections were conducted every year. An existing member couldn't be considered as a candidate in the following year's election. After one term, he was ineligible to take part in the election for three successive years. After three years, he could serve as a member in the *sabhā* again.

This rule was established as a precaution to avoid causing any decline in the purity of material wealth and the spiritual wealth as mentioned in the previous rule which could result from someone's prolonged membership. So, as long as a three-year gap was maintained after one term, a particular person could be elected as many times as necessary.

Relative Not Eligible

This seventh and final clause closely corresponds to the fifth and sixth ones and seems to be complementary to them. It says that any new member must not be closely related to existing members.

Condition on Wealth

Let us review these qualifications one by one. First of all, it says that the candidate must own at least one fourth *veli* of land and his house must have been built on his own land. In addition, it requires him to be paying taxes on his land. One might ask that if he owned land, wouldn't he be paying taxes anyway? In those days, people used to receive land as *raja mānyam* (land grant from the king). Anyone from a brahmin *srouthi* to a laborer like a laundry man used to receive this *mānyam* so that he could carry on with his occupation designated by his caste. This land was not taxable. It was called 'Iraiyili' ('taxless' or tax exempt 'Irai' means Tax). The rule was that the candidate's land shouldn't have been received as gift. Instead, it should have been acquired either by his own effort or inherited from his ancestors who had acquired it by their own effort.

Ideal Dharma and Practical Possibility

One might ask, 'Why is there the requirement of property, tax, etc.? Doesn't a poor man have a right to be a representative too?' as an argument for equal rights. Our ancestors saw that this argument might be all right as an ideal, but it would not go well with the state's mundane activities that had to be carried on with the tendencies of ordinary citizens in mind.

The same *Dharma śāsthrās* that preach the ideal state have also specified the degree to which these ideals should be relaxed or tightened according to the life stages that particular individuals are in. This is because, in practical situations, if the ideal is insisted upon, not everyone would be able to meet such high standards, and it would simply end up being a mere show and hypocrisy. Keeping this in mind, they had divided the society into varṅa*s* and *āśramās* and specified appropriate level of requirements for each of these divisions. 'Relaxing the ideal' does not mean allowing *adharma*. It simply means that up to a certain stage, the rule of dharma wasn't kept rigid, and at the same time, it was devised in such a way that it would gradually elevate someone to the rigid, ideal level. Though this is applicable to all walks of life, it is especially crucial in politics, which deals with a large population's day-to-day situations. More than any other field, politics calls for more room to be given to psychological and realistic considerations. We see that rules and regulations were drawn up based on this consideration from the days of the dawn of Artha *Śāsthrā* to the *Chōḻā* period.

This by no means implies that the current way of politics which has no connection to dharma or divinity, was prevalent in those times. Actually, mentioning dharma and divinity as two separate entities is itself incorrect. It is just empty talk to feign adherence to exalted *dharmic* principles separate from the reverential binding to *Īśwarā*, who rules and controls all of us.

Under Islamic and British Rule

During the Islamic rule that preceded the British rule, the Moguls and the various sultans had deep faith in their religion. Just like ours, their book of law is also religion based. It is called *Shariat*, and they pronounced judgements based only on it. However, it was unconnected to our *Dharma śāsthrās* . Their main focus was to destroy our practice and adherence to dharma as much as possible. Therefore, as far as the majority of the Hindu society was concerned, the state administration was conducted only in a non-*vēdhic* manner.

As I say this, I must add two more aspects: the ones that were like two teaspoonfuls of *ghee* that cooled down the pungency of the non-*vēdhic* methods.

One was that despite the forceful religious conversion that was quite prevalent, they left most of the unconverted Hindu society alone to solve their own problems using the old caste heads (*nāttān̄m̄ais*). Our old methods were still practiced to this extent. In those days, it was more prevalent for each caste head to make inquiries, hear the cases himself, and pronounce judgment. The cases that were taken to the royal courts and subjected to royal inquiries were very few. Therefore, the interference of the royal rules and regulations with the rules of *Dharma śāsthrās* was considerably reduced as long as this caste head system wasn't uprooted and the old system still prevailed.

The other aspect was that when the Muslims created laws for the Hindu society, they didn't enact any law that openly contradicted *Dharma śāsthrās* or affected our way of adhering to these *śāsthrās*, despite their demolishing idols and destroying temples. Though they enforced the tenets of their religion on those who were forcefully converted to their religion, they didn't object to the rest of society that successfully resisted the conversion, practicing its own dharma. They didn't change those *dharmic* rules through the state's laws.

Whatever their ulterior motives were, they had to follow these two policies since they realized that it wouldn't be possible to rule over a large majority of the people while earning their dissatisfaction and enmity.

Even under British rule, these two aspects continued. However, while the former were more into forceful methods and less into devious tactics, the latter were exactly the opposite. Through covert tactics, they eroded the Hindu dharma while appearing softer outwardly. After the Victoria Proclamation, they enacted laws that didn't seem to intrude on religious affairs directly. However, even worse than direct assaults, they resorted to cleverer methods. With jobs as an incentive, they introduced their method of education as a mandatory requirement for those jobs, and then through this education, they made the Hindus lose faith in their *Dharma śāsthrās* on their own. They opened a Pandora's box in the guise of doing impartial research in history, language, and the *śāsthrās*; little by little, they contributed to the loosening up of our social structure and the reverence towards *śāsthrās*. They proved that a Hindu does not have to be converted to a different religion to be made to function in a totally non-*vēdhic* way. While still appearing to be a Hindu, he could be manipulated to have no faith in the *śāsthrās*. In addition, they pulled a portion of the population directly into their religion.

This is very ironic. In their lands, there had been never-ending feud between the religious seat and the royal seat. Finally, they separated the two, each within its own confines, and kept the legislative process of the kingdom mostly unconnected to religious affairs. Though a lot of European countries have a designated religion such as Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, etc. as their State Religion, they still separated the Church and State. A limited amount of Church involvement does appear here and there - for example, the King of England sometimes creates new groups of

Bishops, giving them positions in the House of Lords, and the Royal Coronation can only be officiated by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Nevertheless, when it comes to social legislation not directly connected with religion, it is only based on political considerations. A law book similar to the *Shariat* has never existed in Christianity. The Hebrews who preceded Christ had some form of religious code of law similar to our *Dharma śāsthrās* and *Shariat*. However, when this society split into those of Judaism and Christianity, Jesus Christ didn't give them a code of law, though he preached virtue, morality, and noble way of life to his followers. The eternal feud between the Popes and the kings followed, and eventually the religious and royal seats became separate, distinct entities. When establishing the jurisprudence, the governing body didn't leave much room for religious codes, and this body became essentially secular. Modern science was also born and flourished in European countries. Since the scientific truths were very different from their religious principles, their allegiance to their religion and religious practice became much weaker than that of the Muslims.

Eligibility Based on Property

As one aspect of this reform, they have opened up the eligibility for membership in legislative assemblies, *nagara sahbas* (town councils), etc. to all the citizens, condemning the property-based eligibility requirements as serving a vested interest.

However, they do have a requirement that a candidate has to pay a deposit. They might justify this as a deterrent to prevent people who are not serious from contesting in the election but treating it as a pastime. But in poverty-ridden India, where so many people may not be able to afford this deposit amount, this requirement is actually contradictory to their much-touted equality. An impoverished candidate might have to seek the favor of someone even for the deposit amount. This could open up the door for corruption and preferential treatments. When the rule required ownership of taxable land and a house built on his own land, there was no room for such possibility of corruption.

Reduced Incentive for Bribery

If one looks at human nature, the possibilities for bribery are fewer in the case of people with property and liberty. One might disagree pointing out: 'Even after garnering *lakhs* and *lakhs*, aren't some people still receiving with both hands?' However, this sort of materialistic attitude of viewing money as the primary goal of life and the trend of running after it started only recently. When the spiritual wealth started declining steadily, accompanied at the same time by the arrival of novel luxury items in the shops, the advent of paper currency, and availability of banks where these currencies could be saved, all of it contributed to a change in attitude of the people. Their aim became money and the main goal of life became acquisition of wealth. Prior to this, the luxury items were very limited, and the desire for these luxuries was held in check due to the people's reverence for the *śāsthrās*, which controlled such desires. All these aspects, combined with a lack of means to protect large sums of money in places like banks caused our people not to have such a hunger for money. Therefore, the possibility of rich people taking bribes was very low. Even now, a poor person taking up the post might have more eagerness for money, like a kid in a candy store, and stretch out his hands more than an affluent person. It is not expedient to cause such damage to dharma and justice, forgetting practical realities in the name of equality.

Even in our current system of equality, don't jobs such as cashiers require some security deposits? Doesn't that disqualify a poor person for this post? How then is this equality? Considering the common temptation to embezzle while handling money, the principle of equality is relaxed just a little here to prevent such embezzlement of public funds. By requiring a security deposit, they are streamlining the damage control in the eventuality of such embezzlement. Similarly, it is just another practical reality that an influential member of the *sabhā*, who constantly deals with the public, might accept bribes and carry out some action in return that would serve their self-interest and convenience.

Bribery

Bribery was called 'kaiyūttu' ('kai' in tamil is head) in *Chōḻā's sāsanā*. We call the act of playing games with rupees using a little sleight of hand as 'kai ādal' or 'kaiyādal'. In those days, it was called 'kai oottu' ('oottu' is feeding - 'hand feed') since bribe money was passed secretively, 'feeding' the hands. When rice is fed into a mouth, outsiders wouldn't know what kind of rice it was or what it contained inside as its 'accompaniment'. When food is served on a plate or a hand and the receiver takes it and feeds himself, everyone can see what the food is; however, when food is fed directly into the mouth, it can be accomplished without anyone knowing what was fed. Similarly, when money is stuffed into someone's hands without anyone's knowledge and without entering it into any account books, it resembles the act of feeding and is called 'kaiyoottu'. Just as the mouth swallows the rice, the hand will swallow the money.

As a security deposit is required to avoid embezzlement, the rule requiring land and home ownership was made to reduce the chance of getting 'kaiyūttu'. If the former is acceptable, the latter should be too. It is not equality that needs to be established here - the important thing is unblemished administration. If a *sabhā* member indulged in misconduct in administering public funds, the loss would be recovered by attaching his property. They had this qualification regarding ownership of property as security for this kind of recovery. There is no room for any debate here regarding the equality of an individual's honor and dishonor; the property of the public of a region should be protected in a fair manner. They only acted on the consideration that this *dharmic* and just principle should be carefully guarded.

Another consideration was that someone with real properties of land and house would not run away irresponsibly. Therefore, such a person would remain a resident of that place and would know the region's hardships and lapses.

The care and attachment that someone would show towards his hard-earned property wouldn't be there when he received it as a royal grant. A special, tender attachment would also exist for an inherited, ancestral land and house. It just wouldn't evoke the same feeling as something received as a grant or gift. The pride of receiving this honor might linger for a short while, but it would not stay as a lasting attachment. Someone who spent his whole life solely on land given as royal grant might even flee from there. This is why they included the requirement that one have owned or inherited taxable property in the list of qualifications.

In those days, they had observed that those who excelled in *vēdhic* knowledge and who taught the *Vēdha bhāshyās* were leading a simple life, were more content, and were in general less tempted by material wealth than other people. Therefore, with a higher trust placed on their immaculate conduct, the property requirement was reduced for these people by relaxing the rule and flexing the condition. As a sub-clause to the general requirement of one fourth of a *veli*, it was reduced to one eighth of a *veli* for such *vēdhic* scholars. Even this concession was only a relaxation, not an exemption. He was still required to have at least some property.

Experience of Property Management Essential

There is yet another reason for the property requirement for the administrative *sabhā* members. They need to know how to manage public properties, spend wisely, and keep accounts properly Therefore, it must have been felt that the experience of managing their own wealth would be beneficial and this clause was drafted. Just as someone who suddenly acquired wealth might be driven to squander it away in a pompous manner, someone who had never owned any property might be overwhelmed by the sudden access to the large, public wealth and spend it indiscriminately. Or, going to the other extreme, he might be too careful and frugal in disbursements to the point of impeding undertakings for public welfare. These are all reasons for making property ownership a qualification.

Reason for Home on Own Land

In the context of another clause, I was just elaborating on the argument, 'The care, regard, and thrift that one develops for his own taxable land wouldn't be there for a non-taxable property; therefore, he shouldn't be entrusted with public property.' There is a similar argument with respect to his home as well. If a candidate hadn't built his house on his own land, but instead rounded up some unclaimed land, absorbed it as his own, and built his house on it, he might follow the same trend of rounding up and absorbing in the affairs of the *sabhā*. Hence they made the clause that required him to have built his house on his own land to qualify to be a member of the *grāma sabhā*. Mindlessly condemning and loosening such *dharmic* constraints placed for the maintenance of integrity in public affairs in the name of democracy will only end up harming society.

Age Qualification

Next is the age qualification. At least this aspect has been acknowledged in our democratic republic, and they have set a minimum age without imposing a maximum. There is a new trend in every party: each is trying to attract inexperienced youngsters, claiming to include the 'younger generation' and 'heirs of the future'. So the minimum might be lowered even further to gain their support. Similarly, the voters who elect them also have only one qualification: the minimum age. There seems to be a proposal for lowering the age of a major from twenty-one to eighteen, granting the voting right at the age of eighteen. In the current climate of 'what you see is what you believe', going through life's trials and gaining the practical wisdom to analyze and understand its hardships and joys seems to be happening much later for the new generation than for the preceding generations.

It might be said, 'You are always confined to the *mutt*; what do you know about these things? Do you know what impressive headway we are making day by day in this science, that science, new and novel management techniques, business methods, technologies, art research, and so on? Because of this, the level of our general knowledge has gone way up. Even our school children have been enlightened to such a level as to be able to form their own unions, parliament, etc.'

All of this may be true. But they all concern only the brain and the temporary pleasures of the senses. These will not be useful in bringing about the understanding of what life is all about and what makes it purposeful. And this is not all. As quite the opposite of what you may expect, the very glare from the blaze of these discoveries is making people go backward in their ability to understand life in its true form, resulting in stunted experience. I might be confined to the *mutt*, but people from all walks of life come here and unburden their problems.

Worldly knowledge and life experiences are necessary to analyze public matters and make decisions. A certain level of age and maturity are required in order to gain this knowledge after going through the travails of life. Over a thousand years ago, they arrived at the minimum age after an in-depth analysis of this aspect. They had set this limit for the candidates to be thirty, according to the first inscription. Two years later, after further analysis, they seem to have determined that even this wasn't sufficient and raised it to thirty-five, according to the second inscription. Now, on the other hand, the basic intention of the leaders of each party is to attract even very young children to their fold. So the current reviews are only aiming at reducing this age limit.

Currently, there is no maximum age. Back then, they had a rule even for this, with due consideration for the Nature. After a certain age, the afflictions of old age, such as fatigue and absent-mindedness, set in. Becoming frail in body and mind is known as senility. An increasing number of diseases also afflict them. In addition, in the olden days people's minds used to start going in the path of higher spiritual quests because of their adherence to the *śāsthric* injunctions from the very early days. So they tended to be aloof from everything and developed a detached attitude of 'Oh, whatever! All are *līlās* of *Īswarā*', even when encountered with misdemeanors. This kind of attitude wouldn't do for public administration. They actually need emotional impulses, strict discipline, and briskness in action. That is why, along with the lower limit, an upper limit for age was specified as well.

First, they determined it to be sixty. Then in further thinking and after two years of practical observation, they had increased it to seventy. They must have felt that people wouldn't be too agile after sixty and determined accordingly. After further review, they must have found that though you aren't very agile as you age more and more, even till seventy, your maturity in practical experience grows further, and you have more capability for giving advice on public concerns and drafting rules and regulations. After turning sixty, when the *shashti-abdha-purthi* is performed, people do become less active. That is why retirement age is set at that limit. But only after the reduction of such physical activities, or perhaps because of the resultant conservation of energy, the brain starts to function with increased maturity and efficiency. Ten years after that, senility sets in or the mind turns towards higher spiritual matters. They must have observed this from the activities of the elders over sixty who finished their terms in the *sabhās*, who must have given sound advice for the welfare of the village independently though not through the *sabhā*. Therefore, they must have concluded that it would be all right even if the elders couldn't be active. There were enough officials and assistants in the executive wing to do just that. So it would have been enough if *sabhā* members could just work on legislative duties that would require only brainwork, as long as they had enough energy to occasionally do rounds to inspect the various works in progress. Analyzing thus, they must have amended the sixty to seventy.

Characteristics of 'Elder'

Notwithstanding the permission to hold *sabhā* membership even from the middle age of thirty-five, only the ideas of people over fifty, referred to as 'vriddhas' ('elders'), were respected as bearing the weight of experience. This seems to have been true in general, even prior to the *Chō̱lā* age. 'Elders' are given special respect even in western countries. A *slōkā* that describes the characteristics of a *sabhā* accords a special rank and eligibility to the elders.

'na sā sabhā yathra na sandhi vriddhāh
na thē vriddhāh yē na vadhanthi dharmam |
na sa dharmō yathra na sathyam asthi
na thath sathyam yath - chalēnānuvittham ||'

A *sabhā* without *vriddhās* in it (elders) is not a *sabhā* at all. (*Sabhā* is referred to as 'sā' using the feminine gender. Objects that are referred to in neuter gender in Tamil are mostly referred to as either masculine or feminine gender in Sanskrit. The rivers such as Ganga, Yamuna, and Cauveri are referred to in feminine gender.

Here too rivers flowing eastward are called 'nadhi', in feminine gender and West flowing rivers are are called *'nādham'*. We refer to Narmadha as a female *Dēvatha*, but since it flows westward, its gender is masculine *nādham*. Even in English, some inanimate objects are referred to in the masculine or feminine gender instead of the neuter gender. For example, ship is refered to as 'she'.

'na sā sabhā yathra na sandhi vriddhā:'

'That which doesn't have elders will not at all be a *sabhā*' - or, a proper *sabhā* is one in which elders hold membership. I said that 'vriddha:' means aged elders. Is it enough to be an elder only by age? Can they be referred to as elders who are '*sabhēyās*'? No, not at all!

'na thē vriddhā: yē na vādhanthi dharmam'

'Those who don't expound dharma are not regarded as vriddhas'. One doesn't become a *vriddha* just because of age. Even if he conducts heated debates and possesses vast knowledge, he wouldn't become a *vriddha* worthy of a *sabhā*. He should be knowledgeable in dharma, the ultimate aim of all knowledge and should boldly expound that dharma. Only then, would he truly deserve the title of 'elder' and qualify to be part of a *sabhā*.

Sathya The Foundation for Dharma

A discipline that results in good when adhered to in practice is called dharma. There should be a principle as the basis for such practice. If something is said to be orderly, that should be truth that makes us aware of a fundamental principle in that orderliness. For instance, when lamps, are arranged in a particular pattern that orderliness creates a kind of fulfillment. A decorative design (*kōlam*) drawn with orderly curves and lines evokes a kind of joy; the impression that something is very proper makes one appreciate it. When a pattern is even slightly distorted, it is jarring. The reason is that there is something internal which is orderly on which these outward regularities are based. Just as the eye is able to see the external orderliness, within our heart of hearts we have an innate knowledge about this principle without being conscious of it. Therefore, when the external order matches the internal, a sense of fulfillment is felt.

Similarly, *mahāns* (great souls) like *rishis*, whose *Anthahkaraṅa* (the inner organs consisting of the mind, intellect, and consciousness where thoughts originate) is pure, feel something fundamental very clearly inside themselves. Various orderly routines that are compatible to this fundamental that should be adhered to in the external conduct are collectively termed as ethics, and *dharmic* life is based on this. What I referred to as the internal principle that is the basis for *dharmic* life is what is known as 'sathyam' (truth or reality). *Vēdhās*, *upanishads*, and *śāsthrās* expound this *sathya* in a form that can be understood by the external mind. Whatever our outward actions and however often we perform them in a manner that looks orderly and dharma, they will not be fulfilling unless they are compatible with this *sathya*. Life will simply not be complete; it will not lead us to the lotus feet of *Īśwarā*.

'na sa dharmō yathra na sathyamasthi'

'That which doesn't have truth in it is not dharma'. (Dharma is referred to as 'sa:' in masculine gender just as *sabhā* was referred to as 'sā' in feminine gender)

So it follows that the elders who know dharma and the *sathya* basic to it should accordingly streamline the administrative rules, regulations.

Would a place which elders knowledgeable in dharma based on *sathya* - the *sathya* through the knowledge of *upanishad* and dharma through the knowledge of *Dharma śāsthrās* - come together and make decisions become a *Sabhā* ? Would someone be known as an elder *sabhēyā* if he has the conviction that something was dharma and something was *sathya* based on his erudition in *śāsthrās* and then imparted this knowledge to others? No. Only those who practice those *sathya* and dharma are the real elders. *Thiruvalluvar* also says 'after learning something properly live by what is learnt'. Therefore, without stopping at simply knowing the sathyam which is based on dharma, they should also have experienced it and followed that dharma, which is its external order. Only if such people expound it will the *sathya* enter into other people's minds with a living face and work on them. Otherwise, along with the acclaim that it was a 'great talk', it will simply disappear. If someone is a hypocrite, called *'mithyāchāram'* in *Gītā* by *Bhagawān* no matter how lucidly he lectures on *sathya*, it cannot inspire others. A mere talk on *sathya* with no life in it will not be *sathya*.

'na thath sathyam yath chhalēnānuvittham'

'Chhalēna anuvittham' : 'Chhalan' means hypocrite; 'anuvittham' means 'connected with'. 'Na thath sathyam' means 'that will not be *sathyam*'. The whole phrase means 'what is expounded by a hypocrite will not be *sathyam*'.

Putting it all together, the *slōkā* means, 'that without elders it will not be a *sabhā*; those who don't speak dharma won't be elders; what is bereft of *sathya* will not be dharma; that which is spoken of by a hypocrite will not be *sathya*'. This *slōkā* is fit to be a motto for the UN, the Parliament and legislatures.

There is a common phrase: *'jnāna, sīla, vayo vriddha'*. One who is old just by age is a 'vayō vriddha'. If he matures with knowledge, the adjective '*jnānā*' is added. Only when he abides by this knowledge and lives a life of impeccable conduct adjective 'sīla' is added, and he becomes a *'jnāna sīla vayō vriddha'*. This *slōkā* indicates that only such *vriddhās* are *sabhēyās*.

The *sāsanā* of the *Chōḻā* period also specify knowledge of dharma and immaculate conduct by following this dharma in practical life, as qualifications for the *sabhā* members. Executing ability was also deemed necessary for public workers and a clause was included in it. All these aspects are covered in the fourth and fifth rules that say, 'Expert in *Vēdhās*, *śāsthrās*, and carrying out actions' and integrity in money matters and purity of self.

Elders Who are Exempt

Rishis even when they were in communion with God were outwardly involved in this world and were engaged in activities for the welfare of the world. Though they lived for thousands of years their physical and mental power did not decrease and were not affected by senility. For *Jnānā* and detachment they had not need to run away from welfare of the world. They were firmly rooted in the former while being involved in the latter too. Vaśishtā and other *rishis* like him served as *purōhiths* for several generations giving good advice. Upper age limit was not necessary then. Later, when there was steady decline in the *kali* age in everything even great men suffered the infirmities of old age. Even a thousand years back this must have been the case as seen from the *śāsanās* of *Uththaramērūr*.

Occasionally, there are some exceptional elders. Bernard Shaw is an example (he was alive at the time of this talk). Churchill shows no senility and has inspired his whole nation, leading them through the world war. Though frail for a long time, Gandhi remained mentally sharp and physically healthy until the end, through his mental strength and the strength of the '*Rāmā* Nama'. *Viśvēśwarayyā* is called 'grand old man'. Such people might be there any time and at any place. Nevertheless, when drafting the rules to determine the eligibility for handing over the responsibility of running the state or local government, only the level of the general population could be taken into consideration. Take a police constable's job for example. They have determined that only someone with a certain height, girth, and weight could do the job. There might be someone who is slightly shorter or thinner but has a name for bravery; if he applies for the constable job, he would be told: 'This is all fine, but you don't have the required height and weight.' Government servants are given compulsory retirement at some age like fifty-five or at the most, sixty (for posts like justices), All these jobs have both lower and upper limits.

Office Work and Duties of Public Sabhā

It is true that the members of the local as well as state *sabhās* meet only periodically and conduct only talks and discussions and work in a capacity similar to the upper level supervisors. It is not as strenuous and involved as going to the office every day, reading the files thoroughly, writing, typing, conducting inspection, drawing, going on tours, etc. Therefore, they need not be made to retire like the other employees, who might get worn out from the daily stress by the time they turn fifty-five or sixty. Whatever be their daily routine, even if retired and home bound, the general trend of geriatric afflictions do seem to rear their head after the age of seventy. Considering this, it is quite justifiable to impose an upper limit for age even in these *sabhās*.

Advisory Council of Elderly Intellectuals

If there are some elders who are old but mentally sharp, and capable of giving advice, an advisory council can be set up to utilize their wisdom for the nation's welfare. Although its a council, all of them need not meet at one session for discussion. They may even find it difficult to travel from one end to the other to participate in meetings. This council is not like a legislative assembly, which has to be in session for several days. The government could send some one or write to them and seek their advice when a need arises. In addition, they may be enabled to give advice and suggestions as and when they want without waiting for a government to approach.

Such elders will be there in several parties, or may be independents. After our republic has been set up as a party-based administration it is not clear how far it is feasible to set up an impartial council, consisting of such experienced and wise elderly intellectuals from all over the country within the frame work of the republic and party system.

For now, Nehru seems to be in favor of appointing experts in economics and law in the cabinet without viewing it from a political angle; but as time goes on, we don't know how it'll work out. The election is going to be conducted on party basis and the current proposal is to give voting rights to all adults. In this context it is to be considered whether it is practicable to take into the government elderly, intellectuals irrespective of their party affiliations or their independent status.

To Prevent Authority Being Permanently Entrenched in positions

There is another interesting aspect in the requirement for the maximum age according to the *sāsanā* of *Uththaramērūr*. Someone might gain popularity among the people because of some earlier sacrifices or having implemented a good scheme. The common folk develop such loyalty to them that they blindly approve of whatever they might do and tend to overlook their faults. The leaders also collect several influential people and form groups to establish themselves firmly. As long as these leaders are at the height of power, the lower level leaders, expecting to be rewarded with a lot of comforts and favors, resort to doing whatever it takes to consolidate the leadership. If such a leader got hold of the seat of power, it would become impossible to unseat him. Such leaders, who lived till the ripe old age of eighty and ninety holding on to the seat of power authoritatively and acting according to their whim, did exist in several countries. The *śāsanā* of *Uththaramērūr* prevented by holding elections every year and the rule that a current member couldn't become a candidate for the next three years.

Each member would have been given responsibilities in one of the many committees that took care of the various undertakings of the *sabhā*. The position in the committee was like a job or post in addition to its participation in the discussions of the *sabhā*. At some stage the older generation paved the way for the younger ones because of the maximum age. The minimum age was to prevent the very young and inexperienced from entering the administration and acting hastily.

Educational Qualification

The fourth qualification pertained to education. It was stipulated that an elected *sabhā* member must be well educated. In those days, education meant only knowledge of *śāsthrās* .

Everything was some *śāsthrā*. Dance is called *Bharatha Śāsthrā* and science is called *Vijnāna Śāsthrā*. Even so, in the educational system of the olden days, *śāsthrās* primarily meant the *Vaidhīka śāsthrās* related to *āthmā* and *Paramāthmā*. Then came the subtly imbedded ones such as the *Dharma śāsthrās* and *nīthi śāsthrās* that codified disciplines and good conduct. Next came epics, geography, history, mathematics, chemistry, physics, etc. All sciences and arts were covered under the sixty-four *kalas*. The most important was the *śāsthrā* that laid down the *vēdhic* way of life and the āchārās and anushtānās. Though there are many *śāsthrās*, we use the term 'sāsthrigal̲' only to refer to a person who is well versed in that particular *śāsthrā*. What is currently regarded as the stumbling block for the people's 'progress' and which is totally unconnected to our current educational system, namely the *Vēdhā*, *dharma*, and āchāra, were considered the main stay of their educational system. It was stipulated that only the people who had mastered such an education were eligible to become candidates for these *sabhā* elections.

Does not refer only to the Brahmins

The candidate should had *Vaidhīka* education and should be well-versed in *śāsthrā*. Seeing this, one might wonder whether only brahmins had the right for candidacy and ask. 'Doesn't this imply that the entire *oor sabhā* administration goes only to the brahmin? Isn't this counter to the principle of democracy that provides representation for all divisions?'

There should be no doubt that the *grāma mahā sabhā* gave room for all castes. It is clear from the *śāsanā* that each of the thirty wards of a *grāma* had a representative and the *sabhā* consisted of those thirty people. In those days, people of different castes didn't live mixed in a locality. People of each caste had their own designated area, a particular street or a group of streets. Brahmins lived only in *agrahāram*. Similary, *chēn̄iar* street, karumār (blacksmiths) street, chanar (toddy tappers) street, etc. denote the streets in where people belonging to that caste lived. Even today, we see these names in several places. Within the thirty *kudumbus* (*kudumbu* is their ward), there would never have been thirty *agrahārams*. Each *grāma* would have had only one *agrahāram*. Even if a particular place had a large number of brahmins, those *agrahārams* wouldn't have been larger than four *kudumbus* at the most. Therefore, with one representation for each *kudumbu*, it would not have been possible to have more than four or five brahmins in the *sabhā*. The remaining majority of the people would have been elected from other *kudumbus* consisting of other castes. They could only have been of those other castes.

In the clause relating to property, there is relaxation for the brahmins. This shows that other castes also had the right to be elected. If *'Vēdhā śāsthra nipun̄a'* denotes a brahmin, the word 'nipuńa' (expert) would be redundant since no brahmin could be considered as one if he hadn't studied *Vēdhās* and *bhāshyās*.

Therefore, we can infer that the word 'nai*puńya*' (expertise) in *Vēdhā* Sasthra here doesn't denote direct learning and reciting of the *Vēdhās*, but rather the mastering of the concepts of *Vēdhā śāsthrās*. There were many such people in all castes. We need no greater examples than Appar, S̃ēkkizhar, and Nammāzhvār.

Of course, there could have been some great intellectuals who were not educated. Since that is only an exception and not a general rule, they specified this educational qualification. The intent was to not leave anything to chance, but lay down the rules firmly.

Even Rajendra Prasad, who is the President of our Constituent Assembly, felt that our candidates should have educational qualification, and he gave public expression to his view.

The very name Legislative Assembly reveals its main function - enacting various laws. Educational qualification is required for the judges who have to deal with these laws to give verdicts and for all the lawyers to argue the law points. Then, isn't it justifiable to expect such general educational knowledge for people who introduce these laws so that they could understand the implications and pros and cons of these laws?

Besides, now the government is not limiting its involvement in the general social life to just a few limited, restricted areas such as providing security from internal feuds and external wars, managing common conveniences like railways, postal service, etc. In the name of welfare state, it is also enacting laws on matters relating to the citizens' personal life and all aspects of the general social life. So, isn't it necessary to have enough education that would provide a basic knowledge in all these matters?

The Heart and Soul

Among all the clauses in the *śāsanā* of *Uththaramērūr*, its heart and soul lies in the requirement of the purity of the material and spiritual wealth of the candidate. This purity is the fundamental strength that provided the power of dharma to this nation and made all the foreign travelers right from the time of Megasthenes to sing the glory of India in their travelogues to such a great extent.

To start with, the candidates were required to have shown impeccable integrity with regard to their material as well as spiritual wealth. They were further mandated to maintain this integrity after being elected as *sabhā* members. If they failed, they would lose the membership, and they could never become a candidate again in any future elections. This condition was extended to include their relatives as well.

Currently, anyone who hasn't been publicly proven guilty can stand as a candidate and become a member of a public *sabhā* (*Nagara Sabhā* or City Council or Legislative Assembly, or the Parliament). With clever tactics, countless crimes are prevented from even reaching the court, and they remain hidden. In majority of the crimes, the accused derives the benefit of the doubt for lack of solid proof. In the process, sometimes even major crimes are committed in a clever manner, which lead to acquittal due to lack of evidence.

Potential Cause for Proliferation of Corruption

Let's set aside for now the aspect of purity regarding the material wealth of a candidate. There is a new aspect that is a cause for great concern and distress, an aspect that would have been totally unexpected in the olden days. This is an aspect in the current election method that could potentially corrupt the entire population in general and pave the way for losing the purity of their wealth and soul. By giving voting rights to all adults, I fear that millions of people, who have been pure so far, might get corrupted by money and thereby have their very soul corrupted. Until now, though poor and illiterate, our general public has been afraid to even give a bribe. There have been absolutely no occasions of receiving bribes, especially on a wide scale.

I have two fears: one is the fear that the voters might create a blot for this entire nation by venturing to bribe the candidates after being elected as members for receiving some favor or the other. But only a small segment of the general public, perhaps one eighth or even less, would be capable of giving this type of bribe. This itself is a terrible fault. However, something that is a lot worse, an enormous blemish, has become possible now. This is my second fear.

I am refries to the possibility of vote buying. In our land, where ninety percent of the population has modest means, people could be tempted by money flashed by the candidates for votes. I get jitters thinking about this and wonder what will become of our country that has been praised as '*puṇya bhūmi*' (meritorious land) so far. It is very disconcerting to think of the possibility brought in by adult franchises for the parties to outbid each other in bribing the poor common folk.

Acquiring such monetary strength is only possible if all parties go the wrong way. In other words, the leadership would just become corrupt. Even more than this, my great worry is about the general public itself. Giving room for this one transgression of voting for money might open up room for more breaches, and eventually, getting used to this, people might lose all inhibitions about committing misdeeds. Generally good-natured people, when they are subjected to the one blemish of receiving a bribe, might receive it from opposing parties also. Then, betraying one of them, they could also be subjected to a greater blemish of dishonesty. In place of some sporadic incidents of bribing an officer here and tipping a peon there, the entire nation, en masse, could be driven into such *adharmic* ways of bribery, dishonesty, etc. from its exalted status of '*puṇya bhūmi*'. It is very saddening and it makes one wonder, 'Is this what democracy is for?'

I agree that I shouldn't discuss politics. But under the predicament where politics comes crashing into dharma, sweeping away all the good virtues of our people, how can we keep our mouths shut, in light of the fact that our mutts have been established as seats of dharma?

Just as water gushes out through opened floodgates, the independence that has been finally won after a prolonged British rule has created a climate for all the people to act with sudden outburst without proper restraint, composure, and order. Under these circumstances, if no qualification is mandated for either the candidate or the voter, I have a hunch that it might lead to unimaginable levels of bribery, discord, lies, and evils, involving all these parties, tearing the nation asunder in the name of election. If we suffer decline in dharma just for the sake of showing ourselves off as the biggest democracy in the world, then the glitter of the garb of democracy would simply be an embellishment for a lifeless body.

Our people, even the ones without the qualifications of education and wealth, possess a much greater asset of spiritual purity. When they become candidates and voters under the arrangement that is currently being worked out, they might be corrupted by the tainted wealth and lose their spiritual purity. This is my greatest fear. Should the wealth and soul of the entire population be corrupted as a result of democracy?

The fifth clause of the *Chōḻā sāsanā*, the one that relates to the purity of the wealth and self, prevents just this kind of pollution creeping into the administration of the state. They accepted someone as a candidate only if the local people respected his material integrity with the absolute certainty that he would never act inappropriately in financial matters. If there was even a little bit of doubt or rumour about him, he could never become a candidate in an election.

Spiritual Purity

We do have quite a few people these days about whom we hear that they are straightforward in financial matters. Even among them, several people seem to have some unsatisfactory aspects in their overall character. When we look for education, age, skill, and integrity in all aspects of their conduct, somewhere there are some slips. We tend to overlook their slips and entrust the country's administration to them, as a compromise. In course of time, their slips go down further. This is why they didn't stop with just financial integrity in those *śāsanās*, but also added the requirement for spiritual purity in their eligibility rules. Of course, since financial integrity is of primary importance in public administration, it has been singled out and mentioned first. In addition to that, his character was required to be totally unblemished.

In those days, due to the belief in God, regard for *śāsthrās*, reverence for divinity, humility, discipline, and so on that were deep rooted and widely prevalent among the general population, the character of the people was quite high. Various glamorous aspects of today's world that lure people into the wrong paths were non-existent in those days. Therefore, instead of having to sift through the population to find out perfect people, quite a few of them were available.

To Prevent Corruption Afterwards Too

One who served as a *sabhā* member couldn't become a candidate for three years following that term. The sixth and seventh clauses of this *Chōḻā śāsanā*, which deny eligibility to the relatives of an existing member, were also in line with the central spirit of the fifth clause, the preservation of financial and spiritual integrity. It is not enough to elect people who appear to be pure just at that time. The writers of these *śāsanās* were not clouded by mere idealism; they did recognize that due to force of circumstances pure persons could become corrupt. It was to eliminate these reasons that they had added these two clauses.

The first one disqualified an existing member for three successive years. These *grāma mahā sabhā* elections were held every year. Someone who won in one such election couldn't be elected again for the following three years. Why? Holding the post for several successive terms would increase his influence beyond limits. He would have ample time to cover up any misdeeds that he might have committed. It would lead to doing things in such a way as to benefit his own purposes, doing favors to people whom he liked, giving troubles to people whom he disliked, and eventually shutting them out. Therefore, to prevent someone from taking roots in the seat of authority, the rule says, 'Is the one year term over? Pack up and go away for three years'.

Five Year Term

Currently, they have determined that the general elections will be conducted every five years. It seems that five years is a long enough period which will allow someone take root and thrive. However, we should note that this five-year term pertains to the *sabhās* that administer the large-scale entities of the states and the whole of India, as opposed to a small locality's administration. The issues pertaining to these large states and the nation are unlike that of the local *sabhās*, which deal only with a small number of people and their relatively fewer requirements and issues. Legislating for all the fundamental issues pertaining to all the people throughout the nation requires conducting lengthy analysis, their implementation, and observing at least some of their effects. It seems the five-year term is quite appropriate for doing all these.

There is an additional point in support of this. Because the election is put off for five years and not an annual occurrence, the harmful effects of the unqualified adult franchise that I was discussing just a while ago aren't renewed year after year but put off to just once in five years! Compared to the evil of degeneration of dharma caused by the election-related corruption of all the voters if elections are conducted every year, the evil of by the continued occupation of the seat of authority beyond one year seems to be lesser. Therefore, I don't like to raise objection to the five-year term.

However, a question does arise as to whether someone who held such a five-year membership term should be allowed to stand in the next election.The appropriateness of the concept of term limit for membership in legislative assemblies as a deterrent against establishing either themselves or their own clan in power is quite evident and doesn't need much persuasive argument.

Induction of New Blood

Another aspect that is implicit in the limitation that our ancestors had kept by way of denying membership for three years after a one-year term is that it pays regard to the opinion that new blood should be inducted. It becomes possible to do this by periodically changing the representatives. This annual election and the mandatory gap of three years for a member between two successive terms would have involved all the qualified residents of a village in its administration. It would have enabled all those who met the qualifications of good conduct, education, and skills, to have served as members in these *sabhās* and to have had direct involvement in public service. So they would have had a firm loyalty towards it with a feeling of 'this is our *sabhā*'. The general public wouldn't have been uninvolved and wouldn't have stayed away from local administration thinking, 'Let somebody do whatever. What is the use of my getting involved in it?'

Backbone of Dharmic Administration

The final clause is that the candidates should not be closely related to one who has already had a one y ear tenure. I mentioned that each *sabhā* member serves in committee. All members would have done this in some capacity, and we have seen that positions should be given up after a one-year tenure and members should be reelected to it only after three years. Such a person who had just finished a one-year tenure is one who had served on a committee. This clause means that not only was this person ineligible for the next three elections, but his close relatives couldn't be candidates in these elections either.

Seeing this clause, one might wonder, 'What is this? It is, of course, perfectly all right to look into the financial and spiritual integrity of the candidate himself. How is it fair to disqualify someone for the reason that he is a close relative of an existing member, even though he satisfied all other requirements?' However, careful analysis will reveal that even this final clause is quite fair and *dharmic* and is really like a backbone to the administration.

The argument is that if the close relatives of the old members became new members, they would try to continue any irregularities carried out by the old ones. They would try to cover up the misdeeds of their predecessors. Or, they might even try to defend them. Sometimes, owing to extenuating circumstances, there might be a need to revise some of the earlier decisions. Fearing that such revisions might be interpreted as finding the mistakes of the predecessor and exposing them, they might compromise the welfare of the village for familial attachment. Human nature is such that most people would think only along these lines. In addition to this problem of successive members compromising the general welfare for the sake of keeping their predecessors in good light, there is also another possibility. The existing members might implement plans that would be beneficial to close relatives who might become future members.

The Royal Seat and the Local Sabhā

This is why they limited the hereditary succession to just the king. While this was deemed necessary to foster the people's loyalty to a central authority, in respect of the local government they made sure that no nepotism could be indulged in.

Even at the highest level, monarchy despite hereditary right to rule was constrained by various councils, These councils *sabhās* would take decisions only within the ambit of the *śāsthric* injunctions of Manu Dharma, etc. The fundamental laws were not for the king to establish as he pleased. Regardless of which king ruled, the basic laws were that of the *Dharma śāsthrās* , Artha *śāsthrā*, and *Nīthi Sāsthrā*. Based on these, according to prevailing circumstances, the king had some leeway for establishing additional rules. That's all. In the other countries, since the king had absolute authority for law making, they had the motto, 'The king can do no wrong'. When these rules were flouted by some kings and it was deemed wrong by the elders of these councils they have actually dethroned these kings. Princes like Asamanjan, who went astray, and kings like Vēna, who acted in an autocratic manner, were actually abolished by the members of these advisory councils.

Is it really feasible to establish such advisory councils in each and every locality to scrutinize the *sabhā* members? The father-son line of succession or other relationships might create a whole lot of connections within the members. It would be an overwhelming task to keep setting up councils to attend to these things and set them right. Then, this council itself might have the same problem and another council might be needed to set that right, and so on. There would be no end to it. That is why, with the only exception of the top-level monarchy, they had set up rules for all lower level governments that would prevent not only such father-son succession, but also the succession of other relatives deemed too close.

After experiencing poverty and foreign domination for a long time, our nation has finally achieved freedom for self-rule. At this juncture, in the rush to exercise it, though the old royal dynasties and land-owning dynasties (*zamindars*) have gone, the new entrants in the legislative assemblies might surround themselves with their clan and create similar new '*zamindaris*' of themselves. Perhaps, some clause should be drafted right now to prevent such developments.

The position of the current ministers is not quite the same as that of the old kings. The princes and the dignitaries belonging to the royal families would have held important posts generation after generation. They would have had the necessary background, education, and status. So it wouldn't have necessitated any extra favorable push on the part of the king to elevate their status. This is not true in the case of the current day ministers' children and close relatives. It is quite possible in the current set up for someone with modest means and social status to win an election, become a minister, and shoot up suddenly into wealth and power. What can we say about their relatives?

Besides, since the concept of welfare state has been adopted, the government is making entry into various spheres of the private life of the people. This is a fertile ground for corruption since all kinds of benefits could be promised to the people for some bribe. On the other side of the coin, they could threaten dire consequences related to their livelihood or some such thing if their demands were not met. The new arrangements give room for such controls. Above all, the present situation involving multiple parties gives rise to mutual competition among them, and the desire to consolidate each and every party's power might arise even at the expense of dharma. The trend of bringing oneself up through party and the party through oneself not only leads people to benefit through the party's name but also helps them to bring in their children and relatives in through their influence. There would be an unending sequence of irregularities. Competitions and feuds wouldn't just be inter-party; even within a party, several cliques and factions might form around various influential people made up of their band of relatives. The rise of several such groups might make the ideals and ideology of a party moot and instead create a climate of internal tension with a constant feeling of rivalry such as, 'who can subdue whom, and who can swallow whom,' prevailing as a daily routine.

Considering all this, the decision of the *Uththaramērūr sāsanā* to deny membership to close relatives of existing members appears very wise. Their fair and *dharmic* ways, paying attention to every minute detail in an effort to protect the administration from impropriety evokes our respect.

Dismissal and Permanent Bar

There is yet another requirement in addition to the three-year gap after one membership term. It debarred someone for misconduct during his term from becoming a candidate even after the three years. He would be dismissed immediately after the misconduct is discovered. He would be permanently barred from any election thereafter. In some one-year term, if he had falsified any accounts, committed forgery, or perpetrated any other crime, he would be dismissed at once and disqualified for all future elections.

Disqualified Relatives

Their keen intention to prevent any such wrongs in public administration is revealed from disqualifying not only the offending member, but also all of his close relatives. These relatives were his father, son, brother, father-in-law, brother-in-law, nephew, son-in-law, uncle, first cousin, etc. If the entire clan were shunned like this for the offence of one person, why would anyone take the risk of such misconduct in the administration? The *śāsanā* describes all these relations as 'athma bandhu'.

Note that it didn't stop with disqualifying someone from candidacy for just any pre-existing criminal conduct. Even if qualified initially, any misconduct committed after assuming the membership disqualified him and his entire clan of close relatives. This aspect deserves much attention.

'Panchamāpāthakam' (Five grave Sins)

In addition to mentioning the purity of the soul and wealth, another place in the *śāsanā* has disqualified someone who had committed one of these highly despicable crimes, termed as *panchamāpāthaka*, along with his entire clan of relatives. These five crimes are: *brahmahatthi* (murdering a brahmin), *surapānam* (drinking intoxicating liquor), *swarn̄asthēyam* (stealing gold), guru *thalpa gamanam* (having illicit relationship with guru's wife), and having close association with someone who has committed any of the above four crimes. Though only *brahmahatthi* is mentioned here, any murder was considered as '*mahā pāthakam*' (despicable crime) and the murderer was ostracized by the society. Similarly, any theft, not just limited to that of gold, and violating the modesty of any woman, not just limited to guru *pathni* (wife) were considered *mahā pāthakam*. It was only to stress that which is the most heinous among these crimes of murder, thievery, and adultery that these special cases were highlighted. Any murder is a crime; especially heinous is that of a brahmin, who is so truthful, defenseless, and has no strength or even desire to defend himself. Similarly, stealing gold, which has the presence of Lakshmi, and having lascivious feeling towards guru *pathni*, who should be regarded as one's mother, were specially stressed.

There is also another categorization called *'āthathāyi'* (Āthathāyi is one who sets fire, who poisons, who kills with a weapon one who is unarmed, robs some one of his land or abducts another person's wife) similar to '*panchamāpāthaka*'. In the beginning of *Gītā*, Arjuna refers to the Kauravas as '*athathayi*'s and says that he is worried about the accumulation of papa (sin) by killing even these heinous *āthathāyis*. So killing not just a pious brahmin but even a *mahā papi* (sinner) is apparently deemed sinful.

People who committed such crimes and their relatives would lose the eligibility to become members of the *oor sabhā*.

Śāsthrās and the Law

In those days, whatever were mentioned as 'papa's by the *śāsthrās* were also treated as crimes by the law of the land. Currently, some of these acts mentioned by the *śāsthrās* do not come under the category of crime in the book of law. Actually, doing whatever has been prohibited in the *śāsthrās* as 'papa' is indeed considered a sign of progress and adhering to some *śāsthric* injunctions is considered violation of the law. Such is the current trend.

In the olden days, both the *Dharma śāsthrās* given by the *rishis* as well as the legislative process of the kingdoms were one and the same. There was no necessity for using the conjunction 'and' while referring to them together as in 'according to the law and according to the *śāsthrās*'. *Śāsthric* rule *was* the rule of law. Whatever the *śāsthrās* regarded as a crime was also specified as a crime according to the law. If a process of atonement is specified in the *śāsthrā*, the royal court also considered someone who underwent such atonement as emancipated from that crime. Though the law accepted the fact the papas were removed by proper atonement, it also paid attention to the fact that people who had committed some of these crimes might be prone to repeating them again. Even *śāsthrās* mention that the atonement washes away only the past papas, but give no guarantee to prevent him from repeating them in the future. Therefore, those crimes that would be very hostile and dangerous to the society if allowed to be repeated again were treated more stringently. It was considered necessary to restrain anyone who had committed such crimes, even if he had performed the atonement required by the *śāsthrās*, from repeating the offence in the future by sentencing him according to the code of law for the sake of the general welfare of the society.

Following this norm, the *śāsanās* of the *Chōḻā* period categorized these crimes in two different ways. Some offences were forgiven if the offending person performed the necessary *śāsthric* atonement, and the offenders were subsequently allowed to hold membership in the *sabhā*. For other offences, the offender was not forgiven and was barred from the *sabhā* for his entire life, regardless of any atonement he may have performed. A few of such offences that made someone ineligible for the *sabhā* membership are: brahmins who had eaten meat, people who had committed the aforementioned five grave sins, in particular the one concerning adultery, and any one who had worked against the interest of the village.

Also disqualified, along with their relatives, were people who had submitted cooked up accounts records and those who had given false eyewitness accounts. Any kind of monetary gain through wrong means would also meet the same fate. Acquisition of wealth through any form of wrong means was considered as bribe.

A few Other Disqualifying Aspects

In those days, a prevalent mode of punishment for someone who had committed a grave, heinous act was to mark him with black and red dots all over his body and make him go on a procession riding a donkey. They hoped that such unbearable humiliation would make a deep impression in his mind and deter him from doing it again.

If we start making the jail as comfortable as a traveler's bungalow under the notion of treating criminals with dignity in this unemployment age, some will be encouraged to take that route and enjoy a comfortable living there! Compassion to fellow humans shouldn't go to the extent of becoming instrumental in spoiling the progress of an erring individual towards being good. I am just mentioning this to stress that in any endeavor, we should act mindful of the nature of the subject that is being dealt with. Back in those days, such a person who rode on a donkey and the one who had committed forgery were denied placement in the *sabhā*.

An Election Without Contestants or Voters

I am coming to the important aspect of this election system. This is a very novel aspect - at least, it appears as novel to us. So far, I have been detailing all the rules of this election system. Now I am going to talk about its procedure and describe how it was conducted.

There was no such thing as a group of people called candidates who contested in the election, seeking votes. Nor were there any voters who went and cast their ballots. You might wonder, 'What is he talking about? After an elaborate tooting of the democratic elections right under monarchy, members' eligibility, and all that, now he is saying that no one contested, nor any one voted in these elections!' You might be puzzled. An election without candidates and voters is like a war without swords and blood.

No one declared his candidacy, claiming 'I am running', filed any candidacy document, contested, and campaigned. No one ever sought votes, and no one called a voter ever voted either. Then how was the election conducted? This is how it is described in the *śāsanā*:

Who is a Candidate?

The descendants of Manu *Nīthi Chōḻā* simply adopted the qualifications compatible with those in the *Dharma śāsthrās* coming down from the time of Manu and *Maṅdhāthā* as qualifications for members of the *oor* administrative body. Even if a *dharmishta* (one who adheres to dharma) didn't offer to contest by announcing that he posessed the necessary qualification the people of the village, would know those who had such qualification.

Let us now go into the vital part of how they conducted these elections. All those who are, prime face qualified to contest would be scrutinized to make sure that they met all the qualifications listed by the *śāsanās* or whether they suferred any disqualifications. All such qualified people would then be listed as candidates. From these candidates, they elected one representative for each *kudumbu*.

Selection, Election Officers

One might think that the existing *sabhā* selected the candidates for the next *sabhā* election since the *grāma mahā sabhā* was always in session, but it didn't work like that. The arrangement was such that the elected members had no connection with the existing *sabhā* members. The procedure proposed for our present republic does give some room for the ruling party to use its of authority to gain advantage over the opposition parties by conducting the next election while they are still in power. As party politics has gained dominance, an election that is held under some party's administration does create room for such possibilities.

Giving no room for such a possibility, all the existing thirty *sabhā* members, those who served on some committee called '*vāriyam*', were required to resign from their posts. After that, only under the supervision of a *sabhā* called 'Dharma Krithya *Sabhā*' and with the help of umpires or moderators some would the election be conducted. This is what the *sāsanās* say.

What are these 'Dharma Krithya *Sabhās*'? Besides the *grāma sabhā* and its divisions of thirty *kudumbus*, a village was divided into twelve *chēris* each *cheri* consisting of a different group of people who were performing duties according to their swadharma each under a nāttānmai. *A agrahāram* was also a *cheri*. It is a guess that the Dharma Krithya *Sabhā* consisted of these twelve *nāttanmais*.

The *grāma mahā sabhā* members would quit after the one-year term. For essential businesses, an interim administration would be run by these Dharma Krithya *Sabhā* members themselves with the help of the umpires.

Since this pertains to just one single locality, this interim period would probably last only for a few days. Within this time frame, the selection as well as the election would have been completed.

If this selection of next year's candidates were worked out by the existing thirty members, it might not be neutral. Having worked together under the single body of the *oor sabhā*, they could collude between themselves and manipulate things in such a way that it would benefit themselves and would help to present their misdeeds from coming up in the next *sabhā*. In contrast, if the Dharma Krithya *Sabhā* members, who are independent caste heads, do this selection, no such manipulation is possible. Because of the self-respect that each caste had for itself, they would hesitate to do anything questionable, with each *nāttānmai* thinking 'if I do anything inappropriate, what would the other caste *nāttāņmais* think?'

For additional neutrality, this wasn't exclusively carried out by these *nāttāņmais* alone, but accomplished with the help neutral persons. The royal officials were also supervising it. We infer this from the reference to the *Vēḻāḻa* and the Bhattā, as mentioned before. By all these measures the purity of the election process had been ensured.

Currently, the process is someone aspires to become a candidate and he gets himself nominated by someone else and seconded by another one. Unlike this, in the old election system, no one announced his own candidacy. The dharma *sabhā* administrators of a village selected them, going along with the people's opinion.

Even at present, unlike application for jobs, the candidate doesn't submit his own application as a candidate. In public service, such self-promoting claim seems so unbecoming and hence we have this arrangement of nomination of a candidate by someone else that has to be seconded by yet another person, thinking that this is more honorable. What was the actual norm in the olden days, seems to have been adopted at least as a were formality.

Election Procedure

After the Dharma Krithya *Sabhā* had listed all the candidates deemed qualified by the people of each of the thirty kudumbus, each of these names would be written on a separate palm leaf. Each such palm leaf, containing the name of each candidate belonging to one kudumbu would all be collected and tied up in one big bundle. One bundle of palm leaves would correspond to one kudumbu. When all thirty such bundles arrived, the *grāma mahā sabhā* would be convened. After this, the election would be conducted.

This was in direct contrast to the current method, wherein candidates from several parties and independents contest and campaign. When it comes to campaigning, we can't expect it to be always truthful. So many exaggerated and untrue claims are bound to be there. Such commotion, verbal duels that degenerate into physical ones, and the even more harmful bribery were all absent in the old procedure.

We saw what an 'olai' was - it was a palm leaf bearing the name of a candidate. It seems it is quite similar to a candidacy form. When we go into the details of 'kudam', we will come to know that it served as a ballot as well.

Let's see what this 'kudam' is.

I told you that the *oor sabhā* would be convened for conducting the election. The venue for this convention was the outer halls of the temples, where *Īswarā* Himself was an eyewitness and the people had a humble, reverential attitude towards *Bhagawān*. There, in the broad, public view, the election would be conducted. From little children to aged elders, everyone would attend it. The *śāsanā* mentions this as 'sabāla vruddham'. This is yet another aspect of democracy. This paved the way for all the villagers to feel that the local administration 'is all ours,' with a sense of participation.

All the thirty palm-leaf bundles, one for each *kudumbu*, would be brought to this *sabhā* assembly. There, in the middle of the dais, a *kudam* (a pot) for each *kudumbu* would be kept. This is the *kudam* part of the 'kudavōlai', similar to a ballot box.

In those days, the *archakās* (priests) who performed *pujas* in temples, were highly meritorious in all aspects. They were referred to as 'Nambimār'. In the hall where all the village citizens and the elders assembled, these *Nambimārs* would be given a very prominent place and would be seated on the dais. These *Nambimārs*, who were treated as the representatives of the Lord had to be present without fail to supervise the election of the people's representatives. All activities were conducted keeping the Lord as the witness.

This election would be conducted with some neutral persons, who were known to the villagers for their integrity and discipline.

One by one, the election for the representative of each of the *kudumbus* would proceed. First, the bundle containing the names of the candidates of the first *kudumbu* would be deposited into the *kudam* corresponding to that *kudumbu* by the eldest of the *Nambimārs.* This was the kind of 'voting' in those days. That is, people didn't vote individually for one person. But the bundle of all the names of the candidates who had earned the approval of all the people was raised up and displayed by a very senior *archakā* before depositing it into the *kudam*. He would do this in the full view of all the people. By this, both the unquestionable fairness as well as the democratic principle were ensured.

Then, among the sabāla vruddham children, a little child would be called out, asked to come to the dais, asked to stick its hand inside the *kudam* and pick one of those *olais* at random and hand it over to the mediator. The child would do accordingly. This was the primary act of the 'election'. The person who was named in that *olai* picked by the child would be deemed to be elected.

Thus an innocent child who was totally oblivious to politics and society, was the one who was privileged to elect the representatives of the *mahā sabhā.* They came up with this arrangement in the thought that it was *Īswarā's* will that got expressed thorugh the innocent child.

Election which has Īswarā's Approval

The commonly used term 'Thiruvullach cheettu' means that by picking up a chit at random from a bunch was in accordance with *Īswarā's* will. The entire election was conducted in the temple with the participation of the temple priest; an innocent child picked up a chit. The Almighty Himself was the presiding officer. There is even a verse in Bible (Psalm 8:2 - 'out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength') which means, 'out of the mouth of a nursing baby, the power of God comes through'. Here, the election was set up with the view that His will was revealed through the hands of a child.

The verdict of the people is the verdict of God, is a saying that is commonly used these days. In those days, after conducting an election by gathering all the people in the temple hall, they accepted the results as the verdict of God and were happy that such a verdict was that of the people.

No Room for Hiding or Concealment

The child would then hand over to the mediator the *'olai'* that it picked out of the *kudam* - well, what we think of as random, but really the will of God. He would receive it in his hands with his fingers spread apart and read out the name written on it. The *śāsanā* confirms this very impartial and unquestionable method. This procedure made sure that he didn't already have an *olai* hidden, which was then cleverly slipped into his hands using a trick.

When the mediator read out the name of the elected person like this, they had to confirm without a doubt that he was indeed reading the name on the *'olai'* and not any other name that he came up with as though it was on the *olai*. So all the *Nambimārs*, who were present there, would receive that *olai* one by one and again read out and announce the name. After this, it would be officially recorded in writing and the said person would become a *sabhā* member. This was the *Chōḻā*-age election process for the membership of the *grāma sabhā*.

This was the process by which good and meritorious people were elected in the presence of just the villagers and *Īswarā*, without the influence and support from any party or a specific individual.

No Individual Charisma

As the republic is ushered in the message being trumpeted is that only the ideology and not individual personality will matter. People make proud claim that only now public activities are being carried out on the basis of ideology instead of caste or status. But in reality, it is only now that people give more importance to individuals instead of considering dharma, *nīthi*, administration with integrity, and efficient social set-up. Peoples attachment to individuals almost borders on infatuation. In addition to this, they are clouded by some party's views. Beyond this, looking into facts with an open mind is fast becoming rare.

The individual personalities whom the people follow are the ones with charisma. One may have great political wisdom, ability to devise policies for the country's well being and implement them skillfully, and be of righteous conduct. But another one who doesn't have any of these qualities but is an eloquent orator with an attractive personality garners greater support from the people. Our nation seems to be in this unfortunate state right now. Although people from all strata of the society are swamped by such charisma, it becomes easier to attract the ignorant common folk. When you consider this, I wonder if this mass appeal is the very reason for advocating voting rights for all adults with no other qualification.

In contrast, while monarchy was the form of government during the *Chōḻā* period, personality was never factored in for the lower level elections; there was no party either. The election was run completely on the basis of dharma and qualification. There was no room for candidate's charisma, what party he belonged to, etc. The only things that mattered were that he practiced dharma and that he possessed all the qualifications.

Not Based on Majority

One other important aspect noticed in this election is that the winner was not decided based on the majority of the votes counted in each *kudumbu*. If someone wins on the basis of majority, he and his supporters might immediately start focusing on who their opponents were, followed by devising plans to trouble them and victimize them. Our ancestors of the *Chōḻā* period wanted to avoid just situations.

First, a majority-minority division is created by the voters in the election process. Then, when the ruling power is handed over to the *sabhā* made up of the winning candidates, the decision is again based on party-based majority and minority. This seems to be splitting the entire population into two opposing factions. Both of these factions confine themselves to some ideology and plans, and with that closed mind, they view the other side as the opposition and rivals. The *dharmic* and just requests of the minority are rejected by the majority government. For their part, the opposition refuses to acknowledge any good things done by the ruling party either. They always criticize and find faults with them. That is why, in the *Chōḻā* period, after determining the qualifications categorically, they left no room for such petty quarrels arising from whether someone was in the majority or the minority by resorting to the '*kudavolai*' method of election.

Even after such an election, if someone misbehaved, they made it impossible for him to be entrenched too deeply by limiting the term to just one year. Even within this one year, if any misdeed of a member came to light, he faced dismissal immediately.

Till the Sun and Moon Exist'

The *śāsanā* ends with the statement saying that they would follow this *kudavolai* procedure from the year that the *śāsanā* was written and continue as long as the sun and moon existed for the sake of fostering noble people and removing the authority of wrongful people from their *oor* administration. This declaration made by the Sabha is akin to the signature of all the framers of these *śāsanā* rules, identifying who they were.

Unfortunately, contrary to their wishes, this *kudavolai* method of election didn't continue forever.

Administrative Divisions

It was seen earlier that the *oor sabhā* administration was divided into several departments, called '*vāriyam*', similar to a committee or board. The total number of *vāriyams* was thirty. Twelve of these were classified as general administration, called 'samvathsara *vāriyam*'. Another twelve were classified as 'thotta *vāriyam*', to take care of lands, groves, etc. The other six were classified as 'Ēri *vāriyam*', to take care of irrigation.

Out of the thirty the twelve most senior members in age, experience, and education would be assigned to the *samvathsara vāriyam*. More physically agile, middle-aged members would be assigned the other two *vāriyams*.

In addition, there were two other committees called 'pon *vāriyam*' and 'panchavāra *vāriyam*', each having six members. These members were also elected from the thirty *kudumbus* using the *kudavōlai* method. After electing the thirty members first, twelve of them were selected for these two *vāriyams*.

In the old arrangement, a farmer had to give one fifth of his production to the government as taxes. This would be in the form of grain, not money. Therefore, land revenue came to be called *panchavāram*.

While matters directly related to the production of grains, such as cultivation, seed supply, etc., were attended to by the *thōtta vāriyam*, the *panchavāra vāriyam* took care of the matters related to the collection of taxes. Though the collection of the land tax, business tax, and excise tax were the responsibility of the royal officials, other matters such as the people's opinions and complaints, etc. were attended to and communicated by the *grāma mahā sabhā*, *panchavāra*, and *pon vāriyams*. This is only inferred and not explicitly explained by the *śāsanās*.

The New Story And The Old

The reason why the old practices are being discussed is that they can reform the present practices. It is the *Rāmāyanā*, *Mahābhāratā*, and the other *purāṇās* that have led numerous later generations into virtuous path. Even the present day novels and movies draw their inspiration from these originals.

Our nation is now following the system of democracy which is the slogan of the western countries. Currently, preparations are underway for conducting elections for the village *panchayat* boards and other governing bodies all the way up to the Delhi Parliament. The administrative affairs of the villages, districts, states, and the entire nation are going to be conducted with these members elected by such popular votes. We need to pay attention and examine this carefully. Is it going to aid the common people in cultivating more noble qualities and obtaining the grace of *Īswarā* by following the path of dharma and *puṇya*? Is it really conducive to the national well being and the society's benefit? Or, will it really corrupt the people and aid only in fostering the well being of a small segment of the population? These reasons are only external and do not have a direct bearing to the main purpose of the country's or the village's pure and *dharmic* administration. Giving undue importance to them might actually harm the main purpose, and it will not be a wise move at all.

Worrisome Aspects

Most of the aspects in the new system that we are aware of seem to be quite worrisome. The motto of 'The government of the people, by the people, and for the people', etc. might end up becoming, 'the government of the ignorant people, by the ignorant people, and for the ignorant people'. It is quite frightening to think of this possibility.

Discipline is essential, especially when there is newfound independence. It is so disturbing to see how they are loosening the controls with no restraints at this juncture and I am worried what kind of catastrophe will follow. After getting over an illness, it is very important to be cautious during the convalescence period and follow the dietary restrictions strictly. Similarly, we are now in the intervening period, between the illness of the British rule and a healthy recovery with the help of the power of independence. At this stage, if we give room to any distorted diversions to the people's mind or the representatives' minds, the independence that we have obtained on paper will fail to become lively independence that will foster our growth. Right now, this decision to let anyone above a certain age be given responsibility in the administration and be placed on a seat of authority is a cause for great concern. Considering the qualifications of education, property ownership, experience, and conduct to be unnecessary might lead to a little - or a huge - irregularity.

There is an obvious ill effect of this. Before these new kinds of election methods were established in our country, only a few officials indulged in bribe taking and deceiving by giving false promises. The advent of the election and voting has created room for the entire population, including even tiny villages where bribery was hitherto unheard of, to receive bribes. It is much easier to deceive the uneducated country folk than the educated elite. There is more scope for the candidates and parties boldly to give money directly to these people. Therefore, the deception and lies committed by the candidates and political parties will also increase. In addition to this, the common people themselves will be encouraged to commit their own deceptions and lies towards these very candidates and parties for receiving various benefits. Is this kind of democracy really for our well being or ill being?

It is claimed, 'Because no qualification is required, this is true democracy, enabling any one to contest in the election'. But in practice, since this calls for a lot of expenses, the people who have amassed wealth are the only ones likely to be nominated. In every place and every party, though several people exist who excel in sacrifice, skills, and purity, only the people with economic strength will become candidates. This being the case, what will become of the democratic principles and good administration?

After the election, the candidate who squandered away his money during the campaign might be inclined to recover it back and then accumulate even more for spending again in the next election. Isn't it quite natural for him to follow this path? It is quite painful to elaborate like this. I am afraid what is going to be ushered in might really be 'dhana' *nayakam* (money's rule) rather than 'jana' *nayakam* (people's rule).

Apart from all these, is the government that is to be set up after the election at least going to be a democratic body comprised of the people and for the people? When several candidates contest, votes are split among them and hence it makes it possible for someone who had garnered only twenty-five to thirty percent of the votes to win and become a member. Similarly, in a *sabhā* with a total of about 500 seats, when it is split up among several parties, even parties that have only one hundred fifty to two hundred seats, well below fifty percent, might form a government as the single largest majority. So the party that forms the government, having only two hundred seats with each of its members having only perhaps forty percent of the votes, can show itself off as the choice of the people. In reality, it might have garnered only the support of about twenty-five percent of the people. Though my calculation may not be accurate, even with the support of much less than half of the actual voters (leaving out the people who hadn't voted), a party could come to power. There is yet another disparity here. The proportion of the seats won by a party in the central government may not be compatible with that of the various states. How is this democracy?

Taking this into consideration, another kind of voting method could be adopted. In this scheme, a voter doesn't vote just for his choice of a candidate. He would start with his number one choice and then list all others in the descending order of his preference. It assigns differential grade for each candidate according to his placement on the list. This is called proportional representation. However, this is considered feasible only in smaller bodies such as the upper house councils, but not possible in the general elections for the local, state, and central *sabhās*. This could be true.

I am elaborating on all this proportional arithmetic only to demonstrate that we cannot claim to have a true democracy just because all the people are participating in an election. I just wanted to show that a fake democracy can make itself appear to be a true democracy.

Give Responsibility After Maturity

A party that has a lot of money, control over popular newspapers which captivate people's minds great orators, and authority over educational institutions that inject into impressionable youngsters the poison of politics instead of the nectar of education, is in a position to transform itself into a large party through dubious means. Under these circumstances, democracy could simply become a farce. I wonder if we are indeed heading to that state, and whether we are led to that state by our own people.

A sick person has to be cured before he is given household responsibilities. A child has to be raised to attain maturity of intellect, mind, and body before it is assigned responsibilities. Would anyone hand over responsibilities of a household to such a sick person or child just because they love them? The same applies to matters relating to food. Just out of love, would you stuff these sick and tender ones with all kinds of rich snacks? The majority of our general public is in the state of childhood as far as political wisdom is concerned. The British rule has debilitated them and made them sick intellectually. At this stage, if we give them responsibility in the county's administration, how can they handle it? The primary duty and job of the leaders of independent India is to restore the people's intellectual health and prepare them to become mature and shed all their childlike tendencies. It seems that only after developing the intellectual ability within a few years should we even think of such schemes as the adult franchise, etc.

I see signs that portend even worse evils such as bribery, dishonesty, and the rise of party rivalry that I am afraid will ruin our nation. On one side, social equality is hailed, disregarding caste and religion. However, looking at the practical trend of caste-based parties, town-based parties, street-based parties, and parties within parties, I wonder if we have sown the seeds for people to switch from one party to another, drawn by the money and the vile campaigns, followed by party members themselves hopping from one party to another, thus doing everything solely for self-interest without any other specific goal.

They claim, 'Elections for local government should not be party based. In attending to the necessities of a particular town and implementing those schemes, there is no room for politics. Therefore, this should be carried out without any relation to any party.' Though they give the outward appearance of following this, people say that this is also festered with party politics. Someone made a light-hearted remark about this sorry state as, 'what do you mean just *Nagara Sabhā* and *Grāma Panchayat*? Parties have entered into individual homes.' When party politics is fanned into a large conflagration at the level of the state and the nation, how can you prevent its smoke from entering into the local administration?

Solace from Old Election Methods

At this juncture, it is quite soothing even to muse over the elections held in the olden days, which were based on several qualifications, especially the ones on *dharmic* tendency, purity of wealth and mind. In particular, knowing that such an uncorrupt system devoid of any of the forces of *adharma* was actually practiced in those days is a very comforting thought. We now see several *adharmic* forces: raising funds for the party using all kinds of methods, nominating a candidate on that strength, and the candidate swallowing a portion of the very funds that he received from the party, or, impelled by the intense urge to win, spending his own money indiscriminately. There may be some who might bribe the party to secure their nomination. We see more such acts like spending the money in right and wrong means to garner votes and then earning more money while being in power. Then, as if he becoming corrupt is not enough, he ruins the town and the people with bribery, town after town, wasting energy in party politics all the time. It gives us great pride even to think that we had an election method that was centered on the great principles of dharma, *nīthi*, skill and purity, and transcending the petty limits of party, personality, etc.

Once the concept of personality comes in, his individual likes and dislikes do factor in. For known and unknown reasons, favorites, enmities, and bias will matter. There was no candidate glorifying himself, and there were no voters either. Only in such a system can an election result be absolutely impartial and fair. It doesn't give any room for someone being subservient to the other, and the other in turn enticing him with money and promises of this and that and garnering votes, etc.

Drawback and Justification for It

A drawback might be pointed out in this method. That is, though all the candidates had public support, it might end up electing someone who actually had less support than another candidate. It is entirely possible when a child picks one *'olai'* at random. Even now, such a possibility of electing someone with hardly thirty to thirty-five percent of the votes instead of a majority vote does exist. No method is free from such weak points. But now there is no guarantee that an elected member, even the one with majority, will be of noble character whereas in those days, anyone whose name was entered on the *'olai'* must have been such a noble person. Therefore, even if one was wanting in popular support since every candidate was great in integrity and administrative skills, this one aspect shouldn't be considered a big drawback.

There were plenty of opportunities even then to pick someone who was the most popular among all the qualified candidates in a *kudumbu* by consulting the *nambimārs* and mediators. It occurs to me that they chose not to do this deliberately. Perhaps they didn't want to leave room for any discord and rivalry that would result from this majority-minority division. Driven by the higher purpose of getting things accomplished with a sense of unanimity, they probably played down the ups and downs of the general popularity and conducted the actual selection through a child.

Even in modern mathematics, they say that sometimes an intuitive approach might actually yield correct answer as opposed to a structured procedure. They call this a probability test. When an election is conducted with a strong conviction that *Bhagawān's* will is indeed coming through the child, we might infer that the probability of such an elected candidate having the most public support is quite high.

Any arrangement, however great, is bound to have some drawbacks. In the end, all these are matters of the *'māya prapancha'* (illusory universe). Therefore, all worldly functions will have some imperfections. *Uththaramērūr* election method could have had some such shortcomings too.

For instance, we see quite a few people over the age of seventy and eighty who have sharp intellect and are quite capable of giving advice. One might ask if it is fair to exclude them due to the age limit rule.

Nevertheless, we cannot overlook the difference between a local *sabhā* and the legislatures of the Center or State. Since the local members are very familiar with each other and it is a small-scale administration, it is possible to 'silence' everybody, and cover up most misdeeds. However, in legislatures which cover a large region and is composed of members of the opposition party who are watching like hawks, just waiting to catch any irregularity, it is not that easy to commit an offence and get away with it. So we must understand and appreciate the over-careful vigilance shown in devising rules for local administration. We should particularly note the extent to which they had shown diligence in assuring the purity of the administration and were even prepared to sacrifice a few good points for the sake of such purity. Their motto was, 'It is all right to not be able to implement a few good things. But we should never let any wrong to creep in.'

Most people are subject to the pull of familial attachments to the extent that it might even drive them to act against the welfare of the nation. Only one in a hundred or a thousand will be an exception to this. Considering this, the aforementioned clause seems to be the backbone of a virtuous administration. However, it does exclude some exceptional, highly qualified people.

Perhaps we can consider another option. Just as an advisory council consisting of people over seventy was formed, another organization could be set up for the entire administration. Without allowing direct position in the cabinet, overseeing of officials, or direct involvement with people connected to a government department, a powerful council could be set up that is capable of giving advice strong enough to be regarded highly and implemented by the government. If the elected members consist of people with close relationships to each other, such as brothers or spouses, allow only one of them in the post of direct authority and allow the others to be placed in the advisory council.

All this is loud thinking. It is a matter for careful consideration by the people with specialized knowledge of politics to analyze these ideas thoroughly and come to a decision.

The important point is that in the *Chōḻā* period, they paid so much attention to preventing attachment to relatives from affecting the welfare of a village.

If we consider the rules in the context of such noble intentions, we won't notice the shortcomings. I am not suggesting that we adopt them as they are. All I am saying is that by paying careful attention to the fundamental truth in them, we could adapt them to suit our present context and situations. That itself will be for the good of our nation. It is just to drive home this point that I am talking about all these things in great detail.

Rāmarājyā

The successors of the promoters of *Rāmarājyā* are now framing the democracy. *Rāmā* didn't invent a new rāja *nīthi* and rule the kingdom. If there ever was one who acted without giving any weight to his own opinion and his own purpose, and instead relied totally on the *śāsthrās*, following the precedents of his ancestors, and carrying out everything accordingly to the letter, it was none other than *Rāmachandramūrthi. Rāmā* simply followed whatever was in practice right from the time of Manu and Māndhāthā up until Daśaratha Chakravarthi.

When Daśaratha decided to crown him, he was fully aware that his son had earned the total approval of all the people and that he possessed all the qualifications to the fullest extent. In spite of this, he was supposed to have convened the *sabhā* and sought the opinions of all the representatives of all factions of the population. It is said that he even received the representatives of mlēchās, who were outside the realm of *vēdhic dharma*. Now that is true democracy. In soliciting and listening to the opinions, no distinctions should be made and all the representatives should be consulted regardless of qualifications. Even here, note that only the representatives were listened to and not all the people as in a referendum. We cannot ignore the fact that bringing in the direct involvement of the enormous general population to the royal affairs might lead to several misdeeds, deceits, and wrongs.

We should study how the kings such as Daśaratha and *Rāmā* made their decisions after listening to the opinions of the representatives of all the people. When taking decisions on policy making and drawing action plans there wasn't room for democratic equality. Only with the support of the ministers, who were great dharmishtas (those who practiced dharma), possessed superb qualifications, and were *jnānā*, sila, vayo, vruddhā (as I mentioned before), did Daśaratha, the kings of Raghu lineage who preceded him, and Raghu *Rāmā*, who succeeded him, take their decisions.

It is indeed necessary to know the various opinions of different kinds of people.We do know how *Rāmā* sought out the opinions of the general public for important matters and how he sacrificed his own dear wife for their sake, don't we? I am not sure if any of the current democratic proponents would value public opinion to that extent. It is also clear from this episode how much freedom people had in those days, even to the extent of voicing their opinions about the king and queen. That was true democracy.

Utthara Kāṅdā mentions how even a dog had approached *Rāmā* directly to file a case seeking justice. We have heard the story of how Manu *Nīthi Chōḻā* ruled according to Manu Dharma with Thiruvārūr as his capital when a cow rang the bell of justice reporting its misery. It is true democracy that permits such reporting of whatever is in the subjects' mind to the highest level of government,

However, it is not in the best interest of the nation to give too much liberty to the people by way of freedom of opinion and freedom of expressing such opinion, and therefore it would not be a true democracy either. Democracy should only be meant for doing good to all the people without discrimination, to the entire nation made up of different kinds of people. This being so, it would not at all be a democracy if the burden of making decisions based on the people's opinion is also dumped on these ignorant people, or the ignorant representatives elected by them. That is why, after getting to know the opinions of all the people without any omission, the founders of the dharma rajya, the *Rāma Rājyā*, sought only the support of very highly qualified ones for making the final decisions.

Currently, as the Constituent Assembly is passing each item one by one in the proposed constitution without determining any requirement of qualification for anyone, including the decision-making administrators, all I can do is bring up the old method. So that they don't brush it off as, 'Oh, *Rāmarājyā*? That Thrēthā yuga matter wouldn't suit us now,' I ventured into showing, 'This is not only Thrēthā yuga matter. Even as recent as one thousand years ago, during the rule of the *Chōḻās*, acclaimed by all the historians as possessing great political wisdom, the same principle of democracy and skillful and pure administration was enjoyed as best as possible.' If the westerners are proud of their unwritten constitution, those of us who have been born in this Tamil country have the gift of a written constitution as old as one thousand years. We can also proudly show it off as it was written quite solidly on a stone. Hence this long story.

May *Rāmachandramūrthi* bestow His grace for that one-thousand-year-old *sāsanā* to be a guiding force for today's *sāsanā* makers! Let it not end with being a mere ancient glory.

* * *

ADHVAITHAM

TO EXPERIENCE PEACE AFTER END OF WAR

Who are Dēvās and *Asūrās*?

A story in the *Chāndhōgya* Upanishad says, 'Once upon a time, the *dēvās* and the *asūrās* fought with each other.' When our *Āchāryā* wrote a *Bhāshyam* (commentary) for this, he said, 'Here the word *dēvās* actually refers to the actions of the *indhriyās* (sense organs) that have been purified by the observance of prescribed *karmās*. Similarly, the word *asūrās* refers to the actions of the unrefined *indhriyās* that are after indulgence and petty desires.' Later, he declares even more explicitly, 'The dēvā-*asūra* war that is mentioned here is nothing but the internal struggles that have been experienced by each and every individual of every kind of life form from time immemorial.'

> '*Sarva prāṇishu prathidhēham dēvāsura*
> *sangrāmō (a)nādhikāla pravruttha:*'

In other words, the *Āchāryā* has shown that the *asūrās* are none other than the courses that drag the *indhriyās* towards external matters, and conversely the *dēvās* are those courses that focus these *indhriyās* inward. The consequent tug-of-war that results from these opposing courses is actually the *dēvāsura* war mentioned in this Upanishad.

This should not immediately drive you to the conclusion that our *Āchāryā* also belongs to the present-day groups that claim, '*Purāṇās* didn't really happen. They are all simply symbolic and allegorical stories.' The same Upanishads contain several other references to *dēvās* and *asūrās*. For instance, *Kēnōpanishad* mentions an incident, where the *Paramāthmā* secured victory for the *dēvās*. In those places, *Āchāryā* doesn't interpret *dēvās* as being symbolic. When he wrote the *Bhāshyam* for '*dēvāthādhi karañam*' in *Brahmāsūthra*, he interpreted it as follows: 'Just as we exist in '*Bhūlōkha*' (this-world), the *dēvās* exist in *dēvalōkha* (*dēvās'* world). These *dēvās*, who indulge in sensual-pleasures, also experience defeat, as well as the resultant suffering, jealousy, etc. Therefore, just as some of us resort to detachment followed by an intense quest of *Brahma jnānā* and ultimate liberation, the *dēvās* can also follow a similar path.'

However, the *Vēdhās* and Upanishads also resort to using these *dēvās* and *asūrās* in a metaphorical sense in the course of an allegorical story in order to reveal certain higher-level truths. This is called '*Arthavādha*.' That is, the story is not a mere story. Instead, it serves as a tool to enable the exposition of a higher level principle. It is the *Bhagavadhpādhās* opinion that the above mentioned *Chāndhōgya* story falls into this category. Here, the word *dēvās* denotes not those of a specific kind of life form who indulge in sense pleasures, but rather those noble forces that steer the *jīvās* away from the sensual pleasures and towards the eternal pleasure - it personifies these forces. There is a chapter in the *Gītā* called '*Dhaivasūra sampath vibhāga yōgā*.' In that chapter, *Bhagawān* Krishña *Paramāthmā* gives a list of what constitute *dhaivika guñās* and what constitute *asūra guñās*. He enumerates the following qualities: fearlessness; pure and pious thought; *dhānam* (charity); *thapās*; straightforwardness; non-violence; truthfulness; sacrifice; peace; showing no trace of anger, jealousy, or betrayal towards others and forgiving all their infractions with benevolent grace; and so on as *Dhaivī sampath*. '*Dhaivī sampath*' means 'wealth of *dhaivika guña*.' These *guñās* (characteristics) are sometimes metaphorically alluded to as dēvā*ganās* and their allegorical fight with the corresponding *asūrāgānās* are depicted. He also makes a similar list of *asūra guñās* that stand for the personification of *asūrāgānās*. Vanity, pride, anger, harsh words, and ignorance are all *asuric* tendencies. To go against the dictums of *pravruththi* (to be done) and *nivruththi* (not to be done) specified in the *śāsthrās*, to be impure, to be untruthful, to exhibit beast-like tendencies, and so on are listed as the characteristics of *asūra guṇās* . *Bhagawān* explains lucidly that any means that help lead one to *mōkshā* (liberation), releasing him from the bonds of worldliness, are *Dhaivī sampath*, and any means that bind one even stronger are *asurī sampath*. He kindly comforts Arjuna, 'O Arjuna, don't worry about where you fall in these categorizations or where you will end up. You have been born to be worthy only of *Dhaivī sampath*.' From this, we can infer that *dēvāsura* forces are only associated with a *jīvā*.

We are indeed quite aware of this *dēvāsura* war - the internal struggle that goes on within ourselves. On one side, we feel as though some one directs us to perform noble deeds, not to run after gratification of our desires, not to get angry, not to be jealous, go to temple, meditate, perform service, etc. On the other side, some one seems to tempt us in exactly the opposite direction. Unfortunately, we seem to follow the latter most of the time. Then we cry, get humiliated, and indulge in self-pity. At these junctures, we try to follow the former a little bit more. Again, the second voice rings out loudly. Again, we slip. Again, we take a vow to be good for the time being and attempt to climb up the slide. This virtuous attempt of ours only resembles some one who tries to climb a slick slide while smeared all over with oil. But somewhere in the process at least a little bit of such good intention does exist - we are not totally devoid of it. Even if it doesn't get transformed into action and thus not qualified to be real effort, at least we experience this feeling of some one internally advising us, 'Attempt it like this. It is not becoming of you to go in the other direction.' This inner voice and the force that leads us into erroneous ways keep wrestling with each other again and again. That is, the good *vruththis* and the bad *vruththis* are eternally fighting within our mind day after day.

Vruththi means flow, run, or current. *Chitthā vruththi* means flow of thoughts. Each kind of flow is a *vruththi.* There are hundreds of such *vruththis* per second in our thoughts. Of these, ninety percent are corrupt *vruththis.* Ten percent might be noble ones. The good *vruththis* are the ones referred to as *dēvās,* and the bad *vruththis* are *asūrās.*

Why Does Asuric Tendency Arise?

The *asūrās* do win ninety-nine percent of the time. Nevertheless, during the one percent of the time that the dēvās win we experience great bliss; a certain kind of fulfillment prevails and the heart becomes serene. Then the darkness again closes in. We wish for the victory of the *asūrās*, and they keep scoring victory after victory. A little introspection reveals that even from all these victories the inner conscience feels no fulfillment or clarity; it only gets murky and more unsettled. We become overwhelmed by grief. We cry, thinking about how we have lost our sanity. Then we resolve to never repeat it again. When the resolution is strong, we are able to dampen the force of such negative thoughts the next time they arise. Nevertheless, though we might succeed in doing this once or twice, we unconsciously allow ourselves to be swept away by some of these forces, be they desire, anger, jealousy, or greed. Such actions of ours done under the influence of the asuric powers get entered in our karmic account ledgers as pāpa*s* (sins).

We seem to be committing these pāpa*s* as though some one is dragging us into them by the throat. Why is this so? This is exactly the same question that Arjuna asks *Bhagawān* (*Gītā*, *adhyāya* 3, *slōkā* 36);

> *'Atha kēna prayukthō (a)yam pāpam charathi pūrushā: |*
> *anichchannapi vārshnēya balādhiva niyōjitha: ||'*

Vrishni is one of the ancestors of *Krishñā*. Since *Krishñā* is a descendent of the Vrishni line, Arjuna addresses Him as *Vārshñēya*, just as *Bhagawān* instructs Arjuna addressing him as Kountheya - meaning son of Kunthi.

Dhvaitha That Gives Room for Fear

Bhagawān had given the following instructions to Arjuna thus far: 'Each and every person, even a *jnāni*, conducts himself only according to his natural tendency. *Jīvā* has come into being from none other than *prakruthi* (nature), so how can he possibly curtail this force of *prakruthi*? This is why various occupations have been created to be compatible with each one's nature. These occupations come with their own guidelines for their day-to-day routines through the creation of the different *varñas* and their *swadharmās* (one's own dharma). This would enable people to live according to their nature and then make room for further refinement on a gradual step-by-step basis. In this setup, some one's *swadharmā* might appear superior to that of some one else. However, if he leaves his *swadharmā* and adopts another one impelled by this impression, his *prakruthi* will not let him function properly in the adopted *swadharmā*. As a result, not only will the adopted occupation and its lifestyle sulter, but society will also lose the contribution from his original occupation leading to chaos. Therefore, even if his own *swadharmā* seems not so good, it is still more rewarding to follow it as opposed to switching over to the other, seemingly more remarkable dharma.'

He concludes this instruction with an emphatic remark to make a strong impression on Arjuna, who wanted to abandon the *kshathriya* dharma and adopt the dharma of a brahmin *sanyāsi* by declaring, 'I do not desire war. Begging for alms is much more noble than all this violence.' *Bhagawān* said, 'Even facing death in the process of performing *swadharmā* is highly virtuous. Following some one else's dharma, on the other hand, will lead to great fear.'

What is fear? It is the restless worry of 'What will happen to me? What will become of me?' This fear will keep lingering on until we firmly settle ourselves in a place where we are convinced that nothing can ever do anything to us, nothing can shake us. *Mōkshā* (liberation) is exactly that state which is capable of providing a *Jīvā* with such a tranquil and motionless place. As long as something exists that is foreign to and different from us, the fear of what it might do to us and how it might jeopardize our external peace and comfort will persist.

Dhvaitham is the concept of differentiation or duality that says, 'I am one entity. There is a second entity that is foreign to me. There are several such foreign entities.' 'Dhvi' means 'two'. As a matter of fact, the English word 'two' is derived from this root. This connection may not be explicitly clear since 'two' is pronounced as 't-o-o'; but a review of the spelling makes this derivation obvious. You can see the connection between 't-w-o' and 'd-v-i', can't you?

Where there is Dhvaitham, there is also room for one to fear another entity that is different from oneself. When this Dhvaitham vanishes, the insight dawns that there doesn't exist anything that is different from ourselves, and we establish ourselves firmly with this one *Āthmā* (soul), the fear also vanishes. This Dhvaitham-less state is called Adhvaitham.

Our *Āchāryā* has firmly established through his *bhāshyās* on Brahma Sūthra, Upanishad, and *Gītā*, that the *mōkshā* mentioned by the *vēdhās* is indeed this *adhvaithic* experience. Adhvaitham *is mōkshā*, the (fearless) state, or the state of abhaya.

Adhvaitham is Abhayam

This principle is discussed in the Upanishads. *Thaithirīya* Upanishad states that there is only one real substance, and at the very moment one sees in this real substance something that is foreign and differentiates it as such, he starts feeling fear. A similar statement is also found in *Bruhadhārañyaka* Upanishad. It says that the *Prajāpathi* said, 'When there exists nothing whatsoever which is foreign to myself, what do I have to fear?' It then concludes by saying, 'Only if there exists another thing will fear arise towards that second thing.'

This statement implies that when the state of Adhvaitham is reached, fear disappears. The Upanshads do not simply leave us to draw such conclusions through inference alone. They also directly state in several instances that Adhvaitham is indeed the state of abhaya*m*. Even in *Thaithirīyam*, two or three *manthrās*, it talks about the *adhvaithic* state of *Brahmānandha* (supreme bliss), which is beyond the reach of mind and words, and then it declares directly that such a person who reaches this state will never be afraid. When it finishes this section called '*ānandhavalli*', it reiterates the same thing, saying that the one who reaches the *adhvaithic Brahmānandha* state that is out of the reach of mind and words will not be afraid anywhere. In the former it speaks with respect to time ('*kathāchana*'), saying 'never afraid', and in the latter it speaks with respect to space ('kuthachchana'), saying 'afraid nowhere'. These statements cover both time and space, the two fundamental principles that encapsulate all the modern scientific philosophies. Similarly, in *Bruhadhārañyakam* (fourth *adhyāya*, fourth section) in the last few *manthrās* of a section called *sārīraka Brāhmañam*, there is a description of an *Āthma jnāni* (Self-realized) that ends with a list of attributes for *Āthmā*, which is none other than Brahmam. This list includes *ajaram* (ageless), *amaram* (deathless), amrutham, etc. Abhayam is also included in this list. It again singles this out as its finale and says, 'Yes, Brahmam denotes abhaya*m*. One who recognizes his *Āthmā* as Brahmam becomes fearless.'

Abhayam - *Mōksham*; Bhayam - *Samsārām*

Since the state of *Mōksham* denotes abhayam, we can determine the state that would denote bhayam. Bhayam and Abhayam are opposites. So the state of bhayam must be that which is the opposite of *Mōksham*. '*Mōksham*' means 'liberated state'. So its opposite is 'bound state'. This is called '*bandham*'. These opposites are usually mentioned in pair as '*bandha - Mōksham*'. *Samsārām*, which is worldly life, *is bandham*. We commonly mention '*samsārā bandham*', pairing the two together. Therefore, bhayam is towards this *samsārā*. We have already acquired this *janmā* (birth). When this *janmā* ends and the body is shed, we hope to at least avoid getting into another body again. In other words, we hope not to get caught in the *samsārā bandham* and instead reach the state of *Mōksham*. The fear of 'punarapi jananam' ('yet another birth') after death is itself a matter worthy of great fear. What I am calling 'great fear' is referred to as 'Mahath bhayam' by *Bhagawān* Himself (*Gītā* 2.40) when He starts His instructions on *karma yōgā*. When He describes how the *karmās* dictated by the *śāsthrās* must be observed flawlessly and without the desire for their fruits, He says that it is enough to follow this *nishkāmya karma yōgā* even just in passing; it will save you from the great bhayam (*'Mahathō bhayāth'*).

> *'svalpamapyasya dharmasya thrāyathē Mahathō bhayāth'*

The *karmā* that is performed as '*kāmya karmā*', or self-oriented desire, is the one that binds a *Jīvā* to the *samsārām*. On the other hand, *nishkāmya karmā* helps untie this bond. Therefore, it offers protection from the *mahā* bhayam. When *Āchāryā* composed *bhāshyam* for this, he interpreted *Bhagawān*'s words of '*mahā* bhayam' as the *samsārā* bhayam (fear of worldly life).

Naraka Bhayam

If untied and released, the *Jīvā* would be in the state of *Mōksham*. Keeping one confined in the bonded state would mean making one take another birth and linger in *samsārā* again. The fear is over the possibility that He might bind us into another such body after death. An offshoot of this basic fear is yet another fear - the fear of a possible entry into *naraka* (hell) after death and of the ensuing horrendous tortures. If the bundle of *karmā* contained only an ordinary level of infractions, it would only cause another birth in this world. This itself is a great suffering - a *samsārā bandham*. On the other hand, if the infractions were at the level of grave sins far above ordinary ones, this bundle would lead one to the *naraka lōka* after death to suffer untold miseries and then make him take another birth in this world. These tortures of hell are not endurable for a human body. Therefore, the *Jīvā* will have to take a form capable of withstanding them, called a '*yādhanā* body', to go to *naraka* and suffer the excruciating ordeals.

If *samsārā* can be thought of as simply being on the opposite side of *mōkshā* on a spectrum, *naraka* is at the very end of this opposite side. For this reason, when *Āchāryā* composed *bhāshyās* for the old *sāsthrās*, he often interpreted references to 'fearful' and 'torturous' to mean 'being pushed down into *naraka*'.

Mind is the Reason for Bondage

We just learned that fear arises due to the existence of another entity as long as the Dhvaitha perception prevails as opposed to the perception of a single reality.

Mōksham is the state of simply becoming a single reality - a totally liberated state.

'Liberated from what, *Swāmi*?'

From the *samsārā*.

'How did we get bound into this *samsārā*? By what?'

By *karmā*! Don't you know it, dear son?

'Why did we perform *karmā*?'

To fulfill our desires, of course.

'What caused the desire to spring up? '

This entity called the mind. The mind, through the *indhriyās* and by their actions, gets the experiences that fulfill its desires - such as watching a movie, gossiping, snacking on all kinds of things, and so on.

'In that case, liberation from *samsārā* means liberation from the mind, doesn't it?'

Yes, that is correct.

The Bliss of the Mindless Āthmā

But, if the mind vanishes, we wouldn't be aware of anything! If it vanishes, isn't that tantamount to us vanishing? Then who will experience this bliss of *mōkshā*? Or, is *mōkshā* simply becoming something like an inanimate object as during a deep sleep or unconsciousness?'

No, no! It is true bliss itself: permanent, never changing bliss, the highest bliss, also called *Brahmānandha* and *Āthmānandha*. Even in mundane, daily life, when describing an especially pleasant experience, don't we say, 'It was *Brahmānandha*'? *Thaithirīyam* describes Bhrigu's thapas in quest of Brahmam. At each stage, he apparently thought that he had identified Brahmam with something, which then changed in the next stage. Finally, at the very end, he realized that the Brahmam is actually *ānandhā* (bliss). Therefore the section that details this aspect is itself called '*ānandhavallī*'.

'This is all fine, but if there is no mind to experience things, how can *ānandhā* be perceived, *Swāmī*?'

This is where, dear son, the Dhvaitha - Aḍhvaitha concept comes in. The mind can only perceive something other than itself. It cannot perceive itself. The same mind that is very smart in understanding so many different things is actually very stupid when it comes to understanding itself! You go think about it yourself - you'll understand. The mind is only able to think about, understand, and experience things that are external to it. You think about so many things, write about them, understand them, and experience them. But are you able to envision this mind that is doing all these things? Are you able to make it stop, analyze itself and understand itself? The mind that appears virtuous one minute becomes quite corrupt the next. The mind that is happy one second turns unhappy and broods the next. At one instant, it appears somewhat peaceful. We can't be sure if it will still be so in the next instant. What is this mind? We don't understand it at all. We think that it is the same thing that we think of as 'I' since this is the entity through which a *Jīvā* perceives all his experiences, and when this goes to sleep or becomes unconscious there is no experience. You thought along the same lines when you posed your question.

'Yes, that is what I thought. But you haven't yet shown otherwise.'

The 'I' Even in the Mindless State

All right. You are right in thinking that you don't experience anything in deep sleep as well as in the unconscious state. You were, of course, not aware of your existence then. But were you really not existing at that time? If not, how is it that you woke up from that sleep? After waking up, how come you started performing all kinds of actions, even compensating for the time lost during sleep? Think about a fainting spell along the same lines too. The 'you' who existed before the sleep or fainting spell is still the same 'you' who has woken up from sleep or has returned to consciousness. You realize that, don't you? The same opinions, experiences, relationships, and all those that existed then still continue on, don't they? You still have the same body. More over, even while sleeping or being unconscious, you are still alive, aren't you? The blood circulation, body heat, breathing, etc. are still there, right? Therefore, even when your mind wasn't functioning, you were still there. In other words, though we are able to consciously recognize ourselves as 'I' only when the mind is active, we do exist even when the mind is not there.

The True 'I'

All thoughts and feelings are based only on the mind; the absence of these thoughts and feelings makes a *Jīvā* somewhat equivalent to a jada (an inanimate object). This is what makes us think that the mind is our 'I'. However, even in the absence of this mind, there is something else that is keeping us existing and alive, as jada or whatever. So it is that 'something else' that is indeed our real 'I'. If you ask why, it is because 'it' exists even when the mind doesn't, but without 'it' the mind ceases to exist. When life leaves the body, the body becomes devoid of feelings, doesn't it? Does a corpse have a mind? All right, what about the life principle that left a body? Though it doesn't exist in that particular body, does it totally cease to exist? Not really. It is life; how can it die? Just the same way, the mind doesn't die along with the body either. When the *Jīvā* takes another birth to reap the fruits of its *karmā*, this life principle starts its work again in that new life form. When this new birth takes place, the life principle again starts up in another body. The life that left one body takes up another one. The mind works similarly. It is the life principle that also carries along this mind to make it work within the framework of another body.

Even during sleep or unconsciousness when the mind is inactive, the life does exist; but the mind is unable to act in a lifeless body. Then the body decomposes, spoils, and becomes useless, leading us to conclude that only with the support of life can the mind and body live, not independently. The fact that the mind starts working in a new body only when life enters another body after the destruction of the first body confirms that it is life that is the fundamental principle that the mind depends on.

Awareness of Life Independent of Mind

Adhvaitha *Mōksham* is simply experiencing this life's solitary existence with no association to the mind, the thoughts that arise in the mind, or the bondage of *karmā* that occurs as a result of these thoughts. It is not at all the jada state (inanimate). When the term '*Jīvā*' stands for a live entity, isn't it an oxymoron to call this life principle a lifeless jada?

But then, isn't it true that we were lying down just like a jada during the states of sleep and unconsciousness not associated with the mind?

Of course it is true that we were lying down like a jada in these stages, experiencing no feelings. But the thing that was in such a state was only the mind, not life. Just as you described it yourself as a state that was not associated with the mind, the mind was simply disconnected from the life. Therefore, the power of life was simply absent in the mind. For this reason, the mind turned into a jada. Life still existed with its power even during those times. That is why the vital organs such as the heart and the respiratory system continued to work. Veiled by the *Māyā* of *Bhagawān*, we are now able to perceive only the feelings of the mind. We grasp only whatever falls within the realm of the mind's perception as 'ours'. That is why we are unable to perceive what life would be like after the cessation of the mind. When the main tool through which we derive all our perception ceases to perform, how and what can we perceive? Just as the outside world becomes invisible when we close our eyes, the stoppage of the mind makes us lose the ability to perceive any experience. Therefore we think that we would become a jada. But when we close our eyes, does the world really cease to exist? When the clock stops, we are unable to know the time; but does it really mean that time has come to a stand still?

The life principle that is disconnected from the mind also has an ability to feel. This feeling is the true, real, permanent consciousness; this is the sensation that is referred to as the 'Supreme Consciousness'. The things that are referred to as chaithanya and *jnānā* are actually this one true feeling. In fact, even the statement, 'it *has jnānā*', is technically incorrect. That 'it' is one and the same as *jnānā*, chaithanya, *chith swarūpa*, *chin māthra*, etc. This concept is expressed in English quite nicely. The way in which the mind perceives various things is stated as 'it is conscious of these things', using a little 'c' for 'consciousness'; the life principle is referred to as the 'Consciousness', with a capital 'C'.

The thing that exists as the life principle even in the absence of the mind must be the real 'I'. The mind that acquires its liveliness from this principle can't be the real 'I' (similarly, the body can't be the real 'I' either). There exist states in which we are alive in spite of the mind being absent, but there is no way by which we can exist without the life principle. Therefore, it follows that this life principle *is* our 'I'. Otherwise, we would become non-existent during deep sleep! But it is not so.

Realization of Āthmā and Living Through the Mind

So, there *is* such a real 'I'. But the knowledge of how it exists as pure *jnānā* and the feeling of this supreme bliss are hidden from us behind the mind's curtain, which has been drawn by *Māyā*. This *Māyā* has let the *Jīvā* recognize only the mind's experiences as his own and has let him receive and enjoy these and only these experiences.

With the constant desire and anxiety to experience this feeling of real 'I' and become one with it, if we dedicate ourselves to penance, meditation, Self-inquiry, and praying to *Bhagawān* to remove this curtain of *Māyā* that He has hung, the mind will simply melt and dissolve away. *Āthmā*, our true form, will begin to glow. Unlike the sleeping or unconscious state, during which we are unable to feel or experience anything due to the absence of the mind, when the mind dissolves away, we can actually recognize ourselves to be a consciousness that is above the mind and to be the Self-realized, blissful state. The realization itself is the bliss there; we *are* the bliss!

What we currently identify as our 'self', namely the mind, is actually incapable of knowing itself and only capable of knowing things that are other than itself. Conversely, when we exist as *Āthmā*, the consciousness of our true form, we know only ourselves and don't know any other entity.

Not only would we not know any other entities, but the fact that these entities that are different from *Āthmā* simply do not exist will become quite apparent if we undertake the quest of *jnānā*. This experience of not knowing anything else in the Self-realized state is not similar to the phenomenon of the external world that disappears only for the person who closes his eyes but is visible to everyone else. There truly *is* no other substance besides *Āthmā*. The *Jīvā*'s mind and the arena in which it acts, the *jagath* (universe), are all the illusory creations of *Māyā* from within this *Āthmā* alone.

That they are illusory creations makes them fundamentally untrue (not *sathya*). If an illusory appearance arose out of us, it wouldn't really be us, would it? In other words, if a guise is superimposed on us to make us appear as some one else, that guise is not the true 'us', isn't it? Nevertheless, it is impossible for that guise to stand alone without us. Such a creation requires a fundamental base; only on this base can it be superimposed. *Āchāryā* calls this superimposition '*adhyāsam*.' The substratum that is used as the base is called 'Adhishtānam.' Upon this Adhishtānam, something else is superimposed as an *adhyāsam*. If a person were not available to don the necessary costume, the intended guise wouldn't be viable. Similarly, if there were no *Āthmā* to serve as the Adhishtānam, the illusory mind or the illusory *jagath* that would have to be superimposed on it as *adhyāsam* wouldn't exist either. But the *Āthmā* is not in this illusory perception at all. The person donning the costume doesn't exist as a part of the costume, does he? When the costume is removed, the entire character that it represented including his name and all the story events cease to be associated with the person who donned this costume, right? After all this, this person remains the same and not affected in the least. If the costume consisted of at least some part of the person donning it, this person should be missing something after its removal, shouldn't he? But it doesn't seem that way, does it?

Just as in this example, the *jīvās* (living beings) and the *jagath* that come upon *Āthmā* as an illusory, imaginary creation or guise cannot exist without *Āthmā*; however, *Āthmā* is not at all in this superimposition. *Bhagawān* explains exactly this in the following *slōkā* (*Gītā* 9.4):

'math-sthāni sarva *bhūthāni* na cha(a)ham theshu (a)vasthitha:'

- 'All the *bhuthas* (basic elements) acquire their existence within Me; but I am not within them.'

'I am not within them' means *Āthmā* is not within the *Jīvā* and *jagath*. What does it mean to say, '*Āthmā* is not within the *Jīvā*?' It means that the *Jīvā*, which is hidden from its original form of *Āthmā* by *Māyā*'s illusory imagination, is a separate, individual life-mode (*Jīvathvam*). Furthermore, it means that even this state of individuality is not real. The very term *kalpanā* (imagination) means 'not real', right? Now, what are we identifying this individual (who is unaware of *Āthmā*) with? - the mind, of course.

At the moment, after a thorough investigation, we have discovered that there exists a life principle above the mind. However, this awareness doesn't really carry over into our day-to-day life. We still lead our life with the opinion that our mind *is* our 'I'.

What do we refer to as the course of life? Activities such as eating, getting married, begetting children, education, earning a living, running around from place to place, listening to music, watching movies, reading novels, and so on are collectively termed as *Jīvanam*, or the course of life. Various thoughts drive us to engage into these actions. These thoughts originate in the mind. It is again the mind that orders the *indhriyās* (organs) into action. Therefore, *Jīvanam*, which is the essence of a separate individual, is itself conducted with the mind as its center. The *Jīvanam* that comes into being through thoughts and deeds couldn't be about *Āthmā*, which is inherently devoid of thoughts and deeds, right? So what is the conclusion that we are coming to? Whatever be our conclusion in the end, when we talk about *Jīvanam* and *Jīvathvam* in this world, they are only mind-based. Therefore, if *Āthmā* is not within the *Jīvā*, as in *Bhagawān*'s emphatic statement of 'I am not within the *Jīvā* and *jagath*,' it only means that it is not within the mind.

Mind, Which is Separate from Āthmā

The statement '*Āthmā* is not within the mind' implies that *Āthmā* and the mind are separate from each other. It then follows that the mind is a second entity (*dhvithīyam*), foreign to *Āthmā*.

'You just mentioned that there is no other substance besides *Āthmā*! So how is this possible?'

I have already answered this question, dear son! Let me say it again. There is one real person, and there is a costume that he dons on himself to pose as an imaginary guise. If you wonder whether the person and the guise are same or different, it is really same, while also different. It happens to be a strange, contradicting duality! Let us consider some *Ramaswāmi* who assumes the role of a king. He takes on the king's guise. Without him, the guise doesn't exist. The 'king' part doesn't have a separate existence apart from him. This is Adhvaitham. Then, is *Ramaswāmi* really the king? No, not really. Does that king's kingdom belong to him? No. Do the king's wife and children bear the same relationship to him? No. The king went through so many sufferings and enjoyments. He went hunting; he gambled; he got defeated; he then won the war; he pulled his hair out in grief once; another time, he ecstatically sang a multi-*rāgā* musical piece. Would any of these experiences be that of the real *Ramaswāmi*? Does *Ramaswāmi* own any of the king's gains or losses? When *Ramaswāmi* removed his costume, he didn't get reduced even a tiny bit and re-emerged exactly as the original *Ramaswāmi*, didn't he? Then, the guise becomes an entity that is completely different (a second, or *dhvithīya*) from the real person. That is exactly how the mind and *Āthmā* are different from each other.

I'll give yet another example - it is an oft-quoted analogy in the Adhvaitha *śāsthrā*. In the haze of dusk, a rope looks like a snake. In the haze of *Māyā*, *Āthmā* appears as an individual *Jīvā* - that is, it appears as the mind, which the *Jīvā* identifies as 'I'. Without the existence of the rope there, the appearance of the snake couldn't have taken place. The snake was actually a superimposed imagination. When one doesn't exist without the other, it is Adhvaitham. But is the rope really a snake? No. When viewed from the perspective of the rope, it doesn't have any connection to the appearance of the snake, right? We just thought it was a snake and went through a panic attack. Did the rope have any part in this frightening act? Did the fact that the image of a snake was superimposed on it cause the rope's weight to increase by that of a snake? Then, when seen in bright light, it was clear that there was no snake, simply a rope! (This is the same state wherein the mind disappears and only *Āthmā* is seen under the light of the *Māyā*-dispelling *jnānā*.) When this snake appearance was removed from it, did the rope's weight reduce any? When analyzed in this manner, it becomes clear that the 'snake' did not contain any aspect of the rope whatsoever, and that both are different from each other.

This is exactly how *Āthmā* remains different from mind.

Therefore, the matter doesn't end with my statement that the mind is capable of perceiving only things other than itself. In the beginning, I said, 'If there exists a second thing, it gives room for fear; the mind creates such a Dhvaitha that becomes the cause of such a fear.' That is a correct statement. What I am now saying adds onto that. Not only does the mind reveal things other than itself, but the mind itself also becomes a second entity to *Āthmā* by not being the true 'I' as *Āthmā* is. Call it imagination, guise, *adhyāsam*, *adhyārōpam*, or what have you. It remains separate from *Āthmā* as long as we carry out the actions as mind-centered with the perception of the mind as the real 'I'.

The existence of a second entity causes fear. Since the mind can only perceive 'another', the Dhvaitha universe, the only thing that we are aware of is always frightening. Right now we are happily chatting away, and it is a philosophical chat at that. What if, in the next instant, the earth shakes a little, or an earthquake strikes? Even when I mention it, you are caught by fear, not to speak of an actual earthquake happening. This is indeed the nature of the mind's *dhvithīya* world.

That the mind, which always reveals something different from itself, is itself different from *Āthmā* is the fundamental fear that is the root cause of all other kinds of fear. To let the mind depart from *Āthmā* is the first Dhvaitham, or the first fear. Following this are the various other fears such as the *samsārā* bhayam, *naraka* bhayam, etc., all caused by the various dualities created by this mind.

Self-Realization is Abhaya Mōksha

Therefore, the mind's cessation is the true *Mōksham*. *Āthmā* is the very location of *mōkshā*, which is blissful, abhaya, and Adhvaitha, after it is liberated from the mind and exists as the Self. Though we consider the *Jīvathvam* (individual self) to be an aspect of the mind, the *Jīvā's* innate state is *Āthmā*, the complete and whole, which serves as the basis for the superimposition of the imaginary guise of *Jīvathvam*. The experience of realizing this *Āthmā* and being firmly rooted in it is not a jada state (inanimate state), but rather the supreme life, supreme knowledge, supreme feeling, and supreme bliss. Unlike the mind, which only perceives something other than itself and experiences joys and sorrows accordingly, *Āthmā* realizes itself, and that state is ever blissful. Though every now and then pleasure is also derived from another object, much greater miseries result from it, too. This is not the case with *Āthmā*. Since the external objects that yield fear and grief are absent there, the bliss remains permanent, and it is not pieced into disjointed segments by the intervening sorrows.

The way to be free of fear is to become one with *Āthmā*, which doesn't have any duality, this duality being the cause of all fear. This is indeed the state of *mōkshā*, the liberated state. Existing as a *Jīvā*, which has a mind, is the bound state. The bondage is not only the direct effect of the mind's thoughts, but it is also due to the actions that are carried out by the physical *indhriyās* to fulfill those desires. This bondage of *karmā* (karma bandham) has to be loosened up by the dharma *karmā* alone.

Dharma That Loosens the Bondage of Karmā

Consider a bundle of firewood that is tied up together with a rope. If the knot is too hard to undo, do you know what people usually do? To loosen this rope, they wrap another rope around the bundle and hold it with a single knot even tighter than the first one. They would only hold it tight, not actually fasten it with a permanent knot. Due to this tighter constriction, the first rope around the bundle will become loose. It can then be easily slipped off of the bundle. The unfastened second rope can then be removed, releasing the firewood. Similarly, we are bound extremely tightly in this *samsārā bandham* that resulted from various deeds performed under the influence of the vagaries of the mind. We should try to get out of this bondage by using the *śāsthra karmā* as a second, fake binding. For this fake binding, the *rishis* have prescribed several actions in the form of *swadharmā* dictated by the *śāsthrās*, not some random, haphazard actions. Actually, these rules were really drawn up by *Īśwarā* and then passed along to us through the *rishis*. This *swadharmā* binding is the one that helps loosen the tight bond that we have brought upon ourselves by means of our haphazard actions driven by selfish desires. This *swadharmā* binding is not a real one. However, it will of course choke us like a binding. But what really get choked in this process are only our wrongful desires. The choking is only meant to release us and lead us towards the good. Understanding this fact will enable us to cheerfully perform the *Śāsthra karmās* with strict adherence to their rules without even slightly compromising.

Succumbing to the palate, we eat anything and everything. Later, when afflicted by ailments, we are forced to restrict the food and swallow a bitter medicine. In spite of this hardship, we voluntarily seek out a doctor and request this hardship for the sake of getting our health back to normal.

Prēyas and Śrēyas

The things that fulfil our desires seem to be quite different from the things that provide us welfare. Upanishads refer to them as *Prēyas* and *śrēyas* respectively. An object of our desire is also an object that we love. This is what is called *Prēyas.* This term is not encountered much in common usage. We come across the usage of the word *śrēyas* quite often, though. When pronouncing words of blessings (*āśīrvādham*) that mean 'Let all the highest good happen to you', we say, 'Let all *śrēyas* come to you.' That which generates true welfare to a person is called *śrēyās. Prēyas* is derived from the word '*priyam*' (love). *Śrēyas* is derived from the word '*śriyam.*' '*Śriyam*' comes from '*Śrī.*' Everyone knows that '*Śrī*' means Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, the auspicious *dēvathā.* Only the things that provide true welfare to *Āthmā* are considered the true wealth, the auspicious and the eternal *Śrī* (Nithya *Śrī*).

Certain sounds possess the power to generate welfare by the merit of their very sound; they have *śrēyās. Kāḻidhāsā* extols '*Rāma Nāmā*' (the name 'Rāmā') as '*Jagath prathama mangaḻam*' (the primary auspiciousness of the world). The sound 'Rā-Mā' is such a sound full of *śrēyās.* The sound '*Śiva*' works the same way. It also means auspicious. The sound itself is capable of producing auspiciousness. The egotistic Dhaksha hated the sound '*Śiva*'. *Bhāgavathā* says that *Ambāḻ,* who took birth as his daughter addressed him as follows: 'Since you are hateful of the auspicious *Śiva,* you are a *Sivēdhara* (*Śiva idhara* - not *Śiva*); you are *Aśiva,* or inauspicious.'

We abandon *śrēyas* and get hold of *Prēyas.* We fall for something, desiring it. Then we realize that it is nothing but trouble. At that stage, we see that the only antidote - the thing that will remove the hardship and bestow welfare - is actually that which we normally consider undesirable (a bitter medicine or a severely restricted diet). It may be difficult to accept something that is so undesirable. However, this hardship is not going to stay on permanently. We are always ready to eat forever to our heart's content. We would have done just that, had the diarrhea or dysentery not intervened. So, that desire has led us to this trouble now. We find it undesirable to swallow medicine and fast; they are indeed difficult to do. However, these hardships are not everlasting. So we take the medicine, fast, and follow a very regimented diet. We do recover. But now we are quite careful since we know of the consequent ailment that will follow such unrestricted binge eating. We then restrain ourselves from such indulgence. Whether or not we actually do this, it is what we should do if we are at all smart.

Dharma Medicine for the Disease of Karmā

When one is confined in the bondage of *karmā* that resulted from the undisciplined actions prompted by the free reign given to the mind, the more constricting *Dharma Śāsthrā* binding should be applied to loosen the bondage of *karmā*. Of course, these *śāsthric* rules are not palatable to the mind. They are indeed constricting. However, it is not permanent. It only seems to be binding, and not really with a hard knot. At the fully ripened stage, when the bondage snaps out on its own, the injunctions of the *śāsthric* rules will also be removed. An *Āthma jnāni* has no encumbrances and no rules. None of the rules of *varṇa* or *āśramā* is applicable to him. Since he has transcended these, he is called '*athivarṇāśrami*.'

However, the disease-medicine analogy that I was just talking about doesn't accurately model this phenomenon. A slight difference does exist. The disease of *karmā* doesn't get cured as quickly as an upset stomach or indigestion does after taking just two or three doses of the medicine. It is more similar to chronic ailments. Some people are physically prone to higher levels of acid secretion in their stomach. They have to keep taking medicine on a continuous basis. Some take medicine every day for controlling blood pressure, diabetes, or heart conditions. Similarly, the *karmā* disease that was acquired by the multitudes of indulgences by the mind following the erroneous path can be cured only by a prolonged treatment of the *swadharmā* medicine. Just for the sake of encouraging you, I shouldn't make the false statement that this regimen of following the *śāsthric* injunctions is only for a short period of time, and that this constraint will no longer exist after this short period. Therefore I am reiterating it. It is of course necessary to practice the *swadharmā* according to the *śāsthrās* for a very long time.

It does have an encouraging aspect though. A bitter medicine is never going to be palatable to consume. It will always remain something that has to be tolerated and put up with. Perhaps the initial gagging and aversion might be overcome by getting used to it, but it would never be taken with enjoyment. However, the *śāsthric* rules are quite different. If we follow them and practice them for a little while, we will actually develop a gradual liking for them. Instead of observing these rules with a sense of resignation to it, we will actually start following them willingly, with a sense of satisfaction that we are doing the right thing. Even these days, we see a few cases of people who, deviating greatly from the *śāsthrās*, used to indulge themselves in clubs, drinks, races, etc. When they return to *śāsthric* ways, we see how well they follow the rules for maintaining purity with the required baths and observe fasts and such very willingly. The more deviant they were, the stricter they become, even stricter than the normal adherents are. They actually do these things willingly and happily with a true inner drive and not under any force or compulsion. This is the glory of the *śāsthric* rules. It is not really a bitter medicine. Instead, it is sweet like *kūshmāṅda lēhyam* (an *Āyur Vēdhic* preparation) or *Unāni* medicines. Just as the people with '*pittha*' (excess of bile) constitution and those who have endured a venomous bite taste bitterness in tasty items due to these *dhōshās* (flaws), the *Dharma Śāsthrā* medicine tastes bitter to us due to our mind's *dhōshā*. On the other extreme, it is said that '*sikaikkay*' (a bitter substance) would taste sweet to some one whose body has elevated levels of cobra venom. Similarly, for some one who indulges in the venom of material comfort, the real poison of the evil deeds would actually be sweet. Whatever be some one's nature, when he truly wishes to be reformed, the *śāsthrā* medicine will start to take hold; it will be palatable as well as effective. Though the treatment has to go on for a long time, it is possible to take this prolonged treatment without getting tired of it, since it is a sweet medicine and is consumed with pleasure.

Dhārmīka Karma Not a Direct Means for Mōksha

However, I should make one thing very clear here. *Swadharma karmā* alone won't release *Āthmā* from the tethers of the mind. In other words, *nishkāmya karmā* alone won't directly provide *mōkshā*.

Isn't *mōkshā* the state when the mind itself ceases to exist? At that stage, there would be no thoughts. When there are no thoughts, there will certainly be no actions. Therefore, a *yōgā* that consists of action is incapable of leading to that state.

Dharma Karmā Not Sufficient for Mind's Fulfillment

Man's primary binding is his actions. The next level of binding is through his thoughts. *Karma yōgā* is mostly used to loosen up the binding of action. This *yōgā* is practiced with the attitude of detachment to its effects; this mindset is the fundamental basis for this *yōgā*. To this extent, it purifies the mind, or rather the thoughts. However, this purification is limited to just wiping off the impurities, not embellishing it or beautifying it. Is it just enough to mop up the house and sprinkle it with '*gōmayam*' (cow's urine) (these days, they use Dettol)? It should be enhanced with sitting planks, spreads, or sofas for that matter. Incense should be burnt. *Kōlam* (a decorative design) should be drawn. Similarly, it is not enough just to wipe off the dirt from the mind. It should be embellished by filling it with good thoughts. This kind of embellishment is not possible for *karmā*.

Just because the experience of the Self will happen only after the cessation of the mind in the end, we shouldn't think that it is enough to leave it bare right now, after purifying it. Just as the bad *karmās* are removed by the *swadharma karmā*, all the bad thoughts that we have been harboring through the various births must also be removed only by the good thoughts. Even according to the laws of science, for every action, there has to be an equal and opposite reaction. Otherwise, the effect won't be neutralized. Similarly, the good thoughts that will remove the bad thoughts can't be generated by *karmā* alone. If we let it leave the mind bare, it is only akin to withering down a tender sprout by attempting to pluck it and then trying to ripen it. A tender sprout must be allowed to remain on the tree to mature into raw fruit and then a ripe fruit; only then should it be plucked or let drop on its own.

Karma yōgā that is set up by the *śāsthrās* as *swadharmānushtānam* is useful only for scrubbing and removing the effects of actions performed by the mind and *indhriyās* of a *Jīvā* for fulfillment of its desires. It is not enough to fulfill the mind that had harbored those desires. To set right the bad thoughts of the mind, or rather to stop the mind from thinking bad thoughts, *śāsthra karmā* will not be directly useful. It is simply not capable of doing that. Its nature is such. *Karmā* can only be associated with *karmā*. Deeds that were carried out in the form of action can be set right by doing other actions carried out according to the rules of *śāsthrā*. How can the mind's thoughts and the thinking mind be set right by action?

Love, Devotion

Just as bad deeds must be neutralized with good deeds, bad thoughts can only be set right by good thoughts. This is where love comes in. Love is the highest form of all good thoughts. That love should be channeled towards all living beings. We should practice *bhakthi* (devotion) by channeling it towards the *Paramāthmā*, who is the fundamental basis for all the living beings. If we don't channel this love (*bhakthi*) towards the basis, but direct it only towards its offshoots, it simply won't work. Therefore *Īśwara bhakthi* is essential. The wrongful thought process of the *jīvās* promoted by the mind can be removed only by *bhakthi*.

In other words, *sath karmā* (good deeds) will remove only the bondage of *karmā* resulting from the actions of the body carrying them out in the foreground, which are actually directed by the mind remaining in the background. However, the direct bondage of the mind caused by its thoughts can be removed only by *bhakthi*. *Bhakthi* is also a thought process; it is a process that is carried out by the mind. However, just as the *Śāsthra karmās* serve as the binding that actually loosens up and removes the earlier *karmā* binding, this also works in a similar manner with respect to the thought process. If you keep on practicing *bhakthi*, when it fully matures and attains totality, *Bhagawān* Himself will think, 'Let him not be a separate individual with a separate mind identified as a *bhaktha*.' Then He will untie the *Jīvā* from the mind, release him, and merge him as one with His *Āthma swarūpa* (spiritual form).

The mind has a natural tendency to dash off in all directions, bolting away from all tethers. It is not an easy task to hold this mind down within some constraints of thoughts, which are its direct function, and channel it only into good thoughts like love. That is why prominence is initially given only to *Karma* mārga (path) by the *śāsthrās*.

Good thoughts as background for Śāsthra Karmā

When I say this, it doesn't mean that *karmā* just ends with the action completely. Its impressions - both the good and the bad

- do occur in the mind. This is because we do not perform actions like a machine, without the involvement of the mind's thoughts. Though the actions appear prominently in the forefront, behind this action, there is in fact a thought process. Generally speaking, all the actions we perform according to the whims of our mind are really based on the thoughts that are impelled by the desire for worldly pleasures. The *swadharma karmās* stipulated by the *śāsthrās* are based on two kinds of thoughts. The first is, 'We should make ourselves worthy of the pursuit of knowledge by cleansing all the grimes accumulated by such repeated worldly actions'. The second is the loving thought of, 'Various undertakings of society shouldn't get clashed and muddied. They should be divided in an organized way and carried out properly, resulting in universal well-being.'

Splintering of Mind Reduced by Good Karmā

In addition to these general thoughts, each action corresponds to several specific thoughts associated with just that particular action. For instance, when some one performs the action of a *pūjā*, several specific thoughts come up: 'Now I have to do Thulasi *archanā*'; 'Now I have to do Bilva *archanā*'; 'Now I have to kindle the *dīpa* (lamp)'; 'Now I have to do *pradhakshiṇā* without bumping into the *pūjā* utensils.' He follows them accordingly. Along with the general, primary thought of *bhakthi*, several other such thoughts also accompany this *bhakthi*. This is true for each and every action.

The important, noteworthy aspect here is that the mind is unable to go off into other thoughts unrelated to the action while performing it, since it is integrated with its associated thoughts. When left alone, the mind runs off in scattered directions that have no connection to each other. In contrast, while performing an action, it goes off into a few thoughts related only to that action. To this extent, the mind achieves a certain level of restraint simply through the action. Though not a complete control, at least a partial control of the mind is achieved in channeling it only in one direction.

While sitting around or lying around without performing any action, if we attempt to think about only one thing or a few things related to just that one thing, it doesn't seem possible. The mind simply bolts away to all kinds of unrelated matters. But when involved in a particular task, it is confined to the thoughts related to just that one thing. If we sit down thinking, 'Let me meditate on *Īśwarā*', without any associated actions, the mind just leaps off to all kinds of untoward thoughts. Several people come here and lament about this problem. On the other hand, if you start out with the intention of performing *pūjā* to *Īśwarā* and keep carrying out several actions required for such a *pūjā*, the mind is restrained to a certain extent. Even then, several thoughts arise, some of which might even be unrelated. Nevertheless, a completely chaotic splintering of the mind doesn't arise.

This does not only apply to *pūjā*. Even if some one is playing cards, his mind concentrates on thoughts only related to that. Even a highly distractible child, when engaged in his favorite game, has his mind focused only on the game. Even when his mother calls him out offering snacks, he refuses it and proceeds with the game with complete concentration.

Śāsthra karmās devised by the great people provide two kinds of benefits: first, while other actions engage the mind in unnecessary or even wrongful thoughts, *Śāsthra karmās* channel it only towards the good ones among all the thoughts. Second, they turn the mind away from all the bad thoughts.

When the focus is completely on an action, the mind becomes secondary. Even then, the mind also derives benefits like this from action. On a mundane level, we know at least this much. That is, when we are involved in a *sath karmā*, whatever level of *sath* thoughts it guides us through, or even if it doesn't guide us through any *sath* thoughts, one thing is clear. It definitely prevents us from entertaining bad thoughts, and more certainly, it prevents us from engaging in any bad actions. This is an immense help.

Action and Meditation

Let us consider the task of scrubbing and washing the temple corridor. It is even more remarkable if we scrub and wash with true *bhakthi* and gratitude, thinking, 'It is a place where the omnipresent *Sarvēśwarā* has chosen to be present in an idol for the sake of us simpletons who are incapable of understanding His omnipresence. If we attend to it and keep it from accumulating dirt, our hearts will also not accumulate dirt. If all the residents of the town come together and do it, the society will also not accumulate the dirt of rivalry, discrimination, etc.' Yet the very fact that we have to do this task makes it impossible for us to get immersed in such *sath chinthana* (pure thoughts). Action is indeed a hurdle for the totally single-pointed focus of thoughts. We do have to admit that. Action will assist only in narrowing the focus, but not for complete infusion into just one thought. When action is added to the thought, it is already a dual focus.

So you say, 'Well, in that case, is it really necessary to perform action to direct the thoughts towards a single focus with *bhakthi* and gratitude? Why don't I sit down and meditate instead of undertaking any other task in order to make it convenient for this single focus?'

All right, sit down and see what happens.

Did you put down the broom and sit down?

'Yes, I am sitting down.'

OK, go ahead and meditate for a while just like that.

……………………………………

(Amazingly playing both parts himself, *Periyavā* is remaining silent now for a short while.)

How is it going? Are you meditating? Did I disturb your meditation by asking this question?

'No, *Swamījī*, no. You didn't disturb anything. It got disturbed all by itself. In fact, it is not quite accurate even to say that it got disturbed. The thoughts never really converged into a single point to begin with. So what is there to be disturbed? Just for a second or two, immediately after sitting down, the mind was at peace with *sath chinthana*. It remained focused on *Bhagawān*. Immediately the thought occurred, 'This is why *bhakthi* and meditation are truly better than *karmā*. This is indeed superior and *karmā* is inferior.' I'll be frank with you now. After this, the thoughts further digressed and degenerated all the way to thinking, 'Why is *Periavā*, who should be preaching Adhvaitham, always advocating this *karmā* for me to hang on to?' Then the mind moved on to how *Periavā* quotes *Ādhi Āchāryā* and Krishṅa *Paramāthmā* and says that they have said the same thing. Then it wondered whether there would really be such a big difference between the ideal goal and the practical reality. In continuation of that, a thought came as to how Gandhian philosophy is declared as the ideal goal, while in practice, numerous factories are opened up and military spending keeps increasing. Then it ran off in the direction of politics and started wondering whom to vote for, etc. Finally, it degenerated to the level of cursing the leader of my least favorite party to be debased. Then I started thinking, 'Oh, no! After coming here to clean the corridor, didn't I resort to sitting in meditation, dismissing cleaning as not really useful? Now I have allowed so much of dirt to be accumulated in my own mind! Well, the task of scrubbing and washing is certainly far superior to this. Though it doesn't help converge the mind to one *sath chinthana*, it at least stops the mind from running off in a chaotic manner and constrains it, doesn't it? Enough of this meditation. Let me get up and do the task. But after boastfully declaring to *Periavā* that I am going to do meditation, it doesn't feel right to get up now.' Exactly at that instant, you called out too. Perhaps I am revealing all this frankly because of the good effect derived from the noble intention with which I came to clean the temple!'

The task of cleaning the corridor involves so many subtasks such as drawing water from the well, procuring the necessary pots, securing and tightening the broom's fastening, scrubbing hard in places that have a lot of grime, giving a once-over, poking into clogged drains, etc. Just as the stick that is used to poke might itself break and clog the drain, these tasks themselves block the *sath chinthana* to some extent. Nevertheless, until the necessary level of maturity is attained - that maturity will also come only from *sath karmās* - it is better to be involved in *sath karmā* rather than sitting in meditation. Only the involvement in *sath karmā* channels the thoughts in the right direction, at least somewhat, and to a larger extent it helps turn them away from the bad. Its 'negative' help is much more significant than its 'positive' help.

That doesn't mean that meditation is totally unnecessary in the beginning stages. If we are only going to be involved in actions incessantly and not even try to keep the mind dwelling on a higher plane at least a little bit, we need not have taken birth as a human being endowed with such a mind. We might as well have been installed as a machine in a factory. How can we attain maturity in meditation some day unless we start with an initial attempt? We have to simply start with the immature mind right now so that we can attain maturity at a later time.

A skinny person can become strong after doing *yōgā* exercises. Doing the exercises will, of course, be difficult for the skinny person. Does it mean that you simply give up on the effort? We see several such skinny ones become healthy by initially starting with at least five minutes of practice and gradually increasing it to ten, fifteen, thirty minutes, and so on. This is also quite similar. It is to bring at least a little bit of awareness to you of *Āthmā* and Adhvaitha that I am giving this discourse, with the hope that you can start putting in at least a little bit of effort right from today. While you still have a little bit of this, I am asking you to do a lot of *sath karmā* in order to acquire the mental purity that this practice requires. In the very end, even the thought (the meditation) will cease, and only the experience of the knowledge will remain.

Karma Yōgā and Detachment

Because of its assistance in achieving mental purity, the act of performing tasks with no intention of self-gain and attachment is given the prestigious name of '*yōgā*' and called '*karma yōgā*'. Whatever we do at the whim of the mind gets accumulated and comes back around to get at us in future births. The practice of slapping our forehead upon encountering difficulties or anything undesirable and calling it '*karmā*' refers to just this accumulation. It is again the same *karmā* that lays the first step for cleansing the mind and dissolving it into *Āthmā*. All the lectures on 'The Path of *Karmā*', which are currently very popular, and all the books on this topic published in England and America are about just this. *Karma* mārga (path), *bhakthi* mārga, and *jnāna mārga* are three different vehicles with which one can attain *mōkshā* (let us not get into the debate of whether they are direct vehicles or subordinate vehicles). *Karma* mārga or the path of action is one among these. It is not some action performed according to the whim of the mind. In this path of *karmā*, we perform these actions, whether we like them or not, for the sole reason that the *sāsthrās* have stipulated it. There is no room here for the mind's attachments and bonds. These actions are not done after determining whether they would result in some self-gain or victory. This is called 'Disinterested

Action' - not 'Uninterested', which would mean that the action is performed callously. 'Disinterested' means 'not affected by own feelings and personal likes and dislikes,' or 'not considering the gain or loss of the self.' This is what is referred to as '*nishkāmyam.*'

The mind does seem to have one desire, however! It is the desire to reach *Āthmā*, which is its true Self. This is referred to as '*Āthma Kāmam*' by the Upanishads. Immediately following this, it also refers to it as '*akāmam*'. In other words, this desire to become one with *Āthmā* is really the '*akāma*' state, or the desire-less state. It is wrong only if the mind desires it for its own gain. This is because all the gains that it could attain are nothing but the petty pleasures of the *indhriyās*. When it desires to become one with *Āthmā*, it doesn't gain anything; in fact, it desires to lose itself completely. It wants to burn off without residues like camphor and leave only the *Āthmā* to glow. This desire is not wrongful. In fact, only if we have this desire will we turn towards the principle of truth, leaving the worldly life.

There is a great gain only in this desire that ignores the selfish gain.

'yam labdhvā cha(a) param lābham
manyathē na(a)dhikam thatha:'

That is, it is the same *Āthma lābham* (gain) that *Bhagawān* describes as '*Āthma* gain. Once it is attained, nothing else could be regarded as a greater gain.' As mentioned earlier, since it is a gain that occurs after completely losing the mind, it is indeed worthy of praise. It shouldn't be clumped together with other thoughts of gain.

Karma yōgā, or *Karma* mārga, is nothing but performing actions exactly as prescribed by the rules of *sāsthrā* only because they cleanse the mind and enable it to merge into *Āthmā*, not because they are desirable or pleasing to the mind. Observance of the *swadharma karmā* advocated by *karma yōgā* is the very thing that loosens the bond of *karmā* and cools down its effect, the effect that prompts the aforementioned expression of slapping the forehead and speaking of *karmā* in frustration. This observance is nothing but adhering strictly to the duties stipulated by the *śāsthrās* for each and every individual.

We just saw how performing *karmā* affects the mind in good as well as bad ways. What we refer to as the bondage of *karmā* also contains all the thoughts of the previous births, tendencies, and the impressions of experiences (referred to as '*vāsanās*') of the mind all mixed together. The effects of all the good and the bad deeds that we perform are stored. Future births occur only for experiencing the fruits of these *karmās*. This *karmā* not only pertains to the actions that we perform using our hands and feet, but also the attitude with which we performed them. This attitude also gets stored. For each and every one of our good and bad thoughts and tendencies, we have to take births and reap the consequences. Along with the intense desires that we harbor for some things in this birth, the intense hatreds get stored as well. In the next birth, they come and seize us again. All the things that we refer to as *vāsanā*, *janmānthara vāsanā*, Pūrva *vāsanā*, etc., refer to just this. Just as the smell of asafetida, garlic, etc. don't go away that easily, these *vāsanās* hold on to the subtle body even after this body perishes. When this subtle body takes birth with a physical body again, it lets out this pungency from the mind, hence the name *vāsanā* (smell). It is also called '*vishaya vāsanā*' (smell of matter). '*Vishayam*', in particular, refers to matters that are the fodder for the experience of *indhriyās* (sense organs). Since the mind particularly hovers around the various pleasures of the sense organs and urges the *Jīvā* to go after the related actions, it is this *vishaya vāsanā* that inflates the sack of *karmā*. When *karmā* is performed as *nishkāmya*, without the expectation of experiencing the pleasure of some organ, or, in other words, as a *yōgā*, this *karmā*-sack shrinks in size. If we refer to it as a bundle instead of a sack, we could say that the bundle is loosened. Real *karma yōgā* should not only not be done with the expectation of one's own pleasures of the senses, but the desired effect shouldn't even be the welfare of the world, a much nobler reason.

Let me try to clarify this. As a part of pursuing the salvation of *Āthmā*, the *śāsthrās* have devised the *dhārmic karmās* with the intention of providing the welfare of the world. There is no doubt about this point. Only when a *Jīvā* starts doing things for the sake of the world at large, discarding his own selfish motivation, can he become worthy of receiving the grace of *Īśwarā*, who is the universal father and mother and the basis of all worlds and lives. Only then can he move onto the path leading to liberation. Even so, while observing his *swadharma karmās*, he shouldn't keep a count of their fruits, thinking, 'Wouldn't the world acquire this benefit since I performed this *karmā*?' and so on. Although the *śāsthra karmās* are performed for the welfare of the world, the intended good effect of the *karmā* prescribed by the *śāsthrā* might fail to bear fruit. Every now and then, we do see that a lofty goal goes unattained, even if several people sacrifice their lives for it. Therefore, even though the *śāsthrās* prescribe the *karmās* with the intention of producing the welfare of the world as their ultimate fruit, we shouldn't watch for it with obsession and keep accounts. Only then can we avoid the fatigue, bitterness, and defeatist mentality, such as, 'What did we gain by doing all this good? This is the age of Kali. This is the time only for evils. Goodness can't make it in this world. Let us just mind our own business and stay aloof.' Therefore, completely unmindful of our action's success or failure, without expecting even its intended result, we should have the attitude, 'Did the *Śāsthrās* say so? Let's do it then.' We should then follow it up with action.

Why Does Good Karmā Not Bear Fruit

You might ask, 'Then, are all the *śāsthrās* lies? How is it possible for the *swadharma karmās*, specifically designed for the welfare of the world, to fail and not bear fruit?'

It doesn't really mean that. Just as an individual has to suffer the consequences of his wrong deeds, when an entire society goes in the wrong path it also has to suffer the collective consequences and not enjoy welfare at certain periods of time. At such times, it might so appear that the efforts that we made for the sake of society's welfare were in vain. Note that it only 'appears'! We can't say that it didn't work at all. We might not be able to see the increase of the welfare directly, but the collective *pāpa* of the general population will certainly be reduced by the *sath karmā* that we perform. Just as in the case of personal life, the collective public life also has to suffer for infractions already committed. So this collective *pāpa* can also be reduced or increased by the nature of additional *karmās*. If we only understood this, the questions of 'Is *śāsthrā* false?' and 'Why did it not bear fruit?' wouldn't arise.

Īśwarā has kept us ignorant of what our old pāpa*s* are, what the pāpa*s* of the whole society are, what the puñya-value is for all the *sath karmās* that we perform according to the *śāsthrās*, how much they reduce the weight of the old *pāpa* bundle, and so on. Therefore we must avoid expecting fruits and getting frustrated when such fruits do not materialize. We must keep doing these *karmās* thinking, 'Let the one who checks these account books and balances it privately, do His own balancing following His own schedule. Let us not question this and keep doing our assigned duties without any expectation.' Only when we perform actions without giving any importance to their effects can we tread the path of dharma completely as specified in the *śāsthrā*. The moment we start paying attention to the effects, we start thinking, 'Oh, this *dhārmic* way doesn't yield results? All right, why don't we try to follow some short cut, wrong path, or the path of *adharma*? Perhaps that would be more effective.' Only the disinterested action, or *nishkāmya karmā*, will help in following the path of dharma.

Possibility of Fear Reduced

This is just the beginning of the untying. As mentioned just a while ago, this *karmā* channels the mind along the right path to some extent and prevents it from going in the wrong path to a large extent. After we get more and more accustomed to this and have our mind cleansed, when we start to meditate with only the mind, it won't just run off and scatter away; it will stay steady and disciplined. The more it stands steady on *Īśwarā* with discipline, the looser the binding of *samsārā* gets. Then the mind, which is the very rope that binds *Āthmā* and constricts it, is unfastened by the grace of *Īśwarā*. After this, there doesn't exist a separate *Jīvā* for doing any *karmā*. The entire bundle of *samsārā* completely snaps and the *Jīvā* recognizes itself as the single *Āthmā*, and getting affixed in it, it attains liberation.

The Dhvaitha, the cause of fear, disappears only then. This Dhvaitha is simply unavoidable even when performing *karmā* or meditation. However, it doesn't frighten us as much while performing *dhārmic karmā* or during meditation, which is thinking about *Īśwarā* or the principle of *Paramāthmā*, as it does when we indulge in thoughts and actions according to the whims of the mind. When we think of *Īśwarā* or His formless equivalent, the principle of *Paramāthmā*, this principle or *Īśwarā* is of course a second entity that is different from the person who is doing the thinking. However, unlike worldly objects or objects that are the goal of the other thoughts and experienced by the *indhriyās*, *Īśwarā* or His principle does not have to be feared as though He (or It) might shove us down a pit.

Nevertheless, until the mind gets converged into one focal point through such exalted thoughts and completely ceases to exist, the fear will persist somewhat, but in a different way. As long as *Īswarā* remains as a different external entity, the fear will keep persisting as to 'What kind of *Māyā* would He perform? Isn't He so elusive even to the great *bhakthās*? From time to time, doesn't He hide Himself from them and then entertain Himself watching these *bhakthās* cry and cry their hearts out? Though He is somewhat reachable to the mind at the moment, He might slip off any time and run away. Then who knows what kind of trash this senseless mind would pursue?' However different this fear might be, it is still a fear. Therefore in the Dhvaitha stage, where the mind is still present, no matter how high we reach, it cannot be an absolutely fearless state. Even so, in contrast to the stage where the mind is given full reign and where consequently the mind itself becomes the cause of great fear, there is very little occasion for fear to appear in the path of *bhakthi*.

Dhārmic karmā is also quite similar. Sometimes you fear that this itself might place a further knot instead of removing the existing knot. While performing a *karmā*, however noble it might be, we need to depend on so many different people and external entities. While dealing with them, we might encounter so many situations that give room for anger, frustration, and cheating (cheating others as well as being cheated by others). At those junctures, we wonder whether the binding will ever be loosened. Even then, as long as we remain firm in not looking forward to any of its fruits, we can avoid giving room for wrong emotions such as anger, thinking, 'We are giving it the best and most sincere effort that we can. Are the external entities still a problem? Do we end up getting only some rotten and damaged stuff? Are the people hindering rather than aiding our effort? Let them be. Let us just do what we can with what we have.'

Whatever said, the *karmā* and *bhakthi* that go along with Dhvaitha will not culminate in a completely abhaya state. Nonetheless, if we want to make that transition to Adhvaitha, the state of abhaya, from the current state of *samsārā*, which gives room for fear each and every instant, only *karmā* and *bhakthi* are the starting instruments. The current state of 'fear all the time' will transform into 'occasional fear.' Eventually, it would lead to the state of 'absolutely no fear at any time.'

Observance of *swadharma karmā* is precisely what helps us reach that stage in the beginning. That is why in *Gītā*, *Bhagawān* uses the word 'bhayam' (fear) while saying, 'It is in fact *śrēyas* even if you die in the process of practicing your *swadharmā*. (Remember my earlier explanations of *śrēyas* and *Prēyas*.) If you adopt some one else's dharma, it will only lead to fear.' Here 'bhayam' means, of course, bhayam for *samsārā* (cycle of birth and death).

'swadharmē nidhanam śrēya: paradharmō bhayāvaha:'

'*nidhanam*' means death. Even dying while performing one's own dharma is *śrēyās*.

Swadharmā Even In the Face of Death

This is because death is only for the body. The life within this body is endless, and it has to take new births, entering different bodies as long as some *karmā* remains. Then, is this affliction of *samsārā* endless since life is endless? It is true that life has no end; however, it does have a state of fulfillment. This fulfillment is certainly not within *samsārā*, though; *samsārā* only has deficiencies. Fulfillment is only in that state where life leaves the *samsārā* and remains in its true state. The initial step in the effort to reach that true state is, of course, practicing *swadharmā* in this very worldly life. *Swadharmā* reduces the bundle of *karmā*, which is accounted for after the death. Therefore, meeting with death while performing this *swadharmā* will make us progress in the journey towards life's fulfillment, the end of body in the process notwithstanding. Hence the expression '*srēyas* even if we have to die.'

Direct Result for Welfare of the World

While in the form of *Jīvā*, it doesn't seem possible to stay inactive without doing anything, even for a second. Therefore, as the means to lead to this actionless stage, the *sāsthrās* have prescribed a few actions that we could perform, namely *swadharmās*. When the *Jīvā* performs these *swadharma karmās* in a *nishkāmya* spirit, there is no gain for the mind (the one that causes this *Jīvāthva* (*Jīvā*-mode)) in it. The term *nishkāmya* - that is, without desire - implies this by definition. This is because 'desiring' is the primary, important job of the mind. All actions are only for the satisfaction of these desires. Therefore, doing anything without desire makes it a no-gainer for the mind. But when putting all this effort to perform an action, isn't it preferable to have some kind of gain resulting from it? It is true that these actions are really meant for controlling one's desire and taming the mind; still, should it be left as completely fruitless? Of course, the *sāsthrās* didn't leave it like that. They do grant an indirect gain of leading one to an action-less state while giving no direct benefit to him, but that is not all. It is not their intent to prescribe actions that have no direct benefit to anyone. Limiting the effects of these actions to just the indirect benefit of cleansing the mind with no further use doesn't seem right. It is only proper to make them have direct benefit too, except that the doer should not be a direct beneficiary; that's all. Because, if he had any direct benefit, he would immediately develop a desire to somehow attain it and even start going in the wrong path. Therefore, the *sāsthrās* direct the benefits of his actions towards the entire society, not just him individually. The *swadharmās* have been devised, keeping this broad, universal welfare in mind, as the fruits of one's *sāsthric karmā*.

An example would make this clear. Let's consider some one who has all the conveniences. He needs to do exercise for maintaining good physical health. This can be done in two ways: First, he could follow what is called physical training such as push-ups, *yōgāsanas*, etc. Alternatively, he could put all his limbs to work by actively pruning, digging, etc. In the latter, it is better to do these pruning, digging, drawing water for irrigation, etc. for cultivating a fruit grove that is useful for others. He is already endowed with money, servants, etc. So there is no need for him to toil on cultivating his own grove. However, instead of simply doing push-ups that would benefit only himself, or going to some uninhabited woods to do his pruning and digging, isn't it more uplifting to channel his efforts towards the gardening tasks that would actually benefit a few people? He is not in need of its resultant benefit, the fruits, but he does need the physical health. What he does to achieve this result could incidentally help some one else who is really in need of the fruits, its resultant benefit.

Similarly, those who desire to reach the *Paramāthmā* by getting rid of all their *karmā* are not in need of the result of anything, including the *sāsthra karmā*. However, to attain the level of maturity required to reach the *Paramāthmā*, it is necessary to cleanse the mind by keeping it from taking off in all directions. To achieve this control of the mind, it seems necessary to get involved in some actions in the beginning stages. If these actions were motivated by some self-interest, the *dhōshās* (flaws) associated with these actions would be accumulated by the doer. Therefore, it has to be an action that has no self-interest. But should it be a useless action such as the pruning and digging of some uninhabited forest or wasteland? Well, that doesn't seem to be a smart thing to do! Just as in the example of the well-to-do gentleman, who had to do exercise only for health reasons but was not in need of cultivating a grove to harvest fruits, this *Jīvā* has to do *karmā* only for the purification of the mind but is not in need of reaping its fruits directly. However, just as the gentleman implemented his exercise routine by cultivating a grove for the use of others, this *Jīvā* should also do this mind-cleansing *karmā* in a way that benefits the world. This is why the *śāsthrās* have divided various tasks and assigned them as different *swadharmās* to different people.

Just as some people are in need of the fruits from the grove, there will always be a number of people within this world itself, existing in its lower rungs, in need of various good effects. In *Bhagawān*'s līlā (cosmic play), such universal drama is always happening.

Drama of the Universe and the Deluge

It is just not feasible for everyone to attempt for *mōkshā*, do away with *samsārā*, and discard the worldly life altogether. *Īśwarā* is conducting this drama of the universe, creating people with various ways of thinking, making them run all over, producing very many hues of motifs (*rasas*). It is just for watching and enjoying this drama that he carries on with his līlā. If everyone became a *jnāni* and a great *bhaktha*, being aloof, accepting whatever way that is shown by Him, increasing only the *rasa* of love, or transcending even that and immersed in total peace, how then can *Īśwarā* get to see the different *rasas* of the drama?

At the same time, He is also a gracious benefactor. Therefore, though engrossed in this entertainment, after the passage of several *yugas*, and at the end of a *kalpa*, He empathizes thus: 'Poor things! They have been running around for too long!' With His infinite grace, He draws them all back into Himself. This is not the ultimate merging that happens as a result of their efforts; *Īśwarā* Himself draws them in.

This is called *Mahā Pra̱laya* (universal dissolution), which makes the whole universe disappear.

Purāṅās mention various different kinds of *Pra̱layas*. They are as follows: '*Nithya Pra̱layam*' is the one that occurs everyday, where everyone is temporarily absorbed into *Īśwarā* during sleep. Another one is the absorption into Him for a short while immediately after death, prior to the experience of *swarga* (heaven), *naraka* (hell), and re-birth. Another *Pra̱laya* is when the entire creation is briefly absorbed into Him at the end of each manvanthara (the period of one Manu's terms of authority - roughly seventy cycles of the four *yugas*). Fourteen such manvantharas make up one day of *Brahmā* (also called *kalpa*). This is also made up of one thousand cycles of the four *yugas*. *Brahmā*'s night, which is of equal duration as his day, is the '*Naimitthika Pra̱laya*', during which, all the *jīvās* are absorbed in *Īśwarā* as no creation takes place at that time. *Brahmā* lives for one hundred such years, wherein each of his day (as mentioned above) consists of two thousand *chathur yugā* duration, and then *Brahmā* himself merges with the *Paramāthmā*. This is called '*Prākruthika Pra̱layam*', which lasts for another one hundred such *Brahmā*-years. After this, *Paramāthmā* starts yet another creation with the next *Brahmā*. There is also another *Pra̱laya*, which is never ending, called '*Adhyanthika Pra̱layam*'.

No matter for how many *yugas* these *jīvās* are absorbed in *Īśwarā*, none of the occurrences of this absorption is really the Adhvaitha *mōkshā* that makes them one with Him permanently with the true knowledge of Him. These *jīvās* that were absorbed during these *Pra̱layas* will have to come out of that absorption and take birth again when creation resumes after all those *yugas*, and He has to watch the drama again. These absorptions don't entail the experience of knowing Him either.

The true, permanent liberation is the identification of the Self with Him, indistinguishably merging with Him, and just becoming the knowledge of the Self. Absorption (*layam*) is not the same as oneness (*aikyam*). *Layam* is the state, where one entity is simply intertwined with the other inseparably, not actually becoming the other. This is the reason why He is able to release those who were absorbed in the *Pra͟layam* out into the *samsārā* again. A good example is the '*Nithya Pra͟laya*', or the sleep.

Śāsthrās only mention this kind of absorption of all the living beings into Him, which happens simply by His grace and not by any effort or achievement of their own, and their re-birth in the next creation. They do not mention that the entire world receives the knowledge of the Self and attains the blissful *mōkshā*.

In other words, the *śāsthrās* imply, 'If there is a thing called the world, it will have a number of people in it who are not able to attain *mōkshā*. There will also be a number of people who aren't specially endowed with *bhakthi* and *jnānā*. When *Īśwarā* thinks that even these people should be blessed with the peaceful state that occurs during the absorption into Himself, He draws everything into Himself, dissolving the entire universe during *Pra͟laya*. He wouldn't have a world and then let it have only the *rasa* of *bhakthi* and the peace of *jnānā* in it.'

For the true, peaceful state of *jnānā*, the existence or the non-existence of the world is of no consequence. For the *rasa* of love also, the worlds of *Vaikūntā* and *Kailāsa* are there for the increase of that one *rasa*. Therefore, this *Jīva lōka* (world of the living beings) has to remain the arena where the drama with the *nava rasa* (the nine motifs) takes place.

For Worldly Life's Greater Good

Only when He grants the '*Mahā Pra͟laya*' and absorbs everything into Himself will this drama come to an end. Until then, it is not at all possible for all the crores and crores of people, who are the actors in this drama, to follow the path of liberation completely by their own effort. They will go in the path of *bhakthi* to some extent. To an even lesser extent they will go in the path of *jnānā*, which would lead to the Adhvaitha *mukthi*.

Even so, they should certainly be channeled in this path at least to some extent. That itself is a great consolation for the affliction of *samsārā*. This 'small extent' has to increase little by little and at least after a large number of births, it should become a total involvement.

To enable these ordinary people to have such progress, the ones who are attempting to attain liberation could utilize the *karmās* that they have to perform for their own mind-purification. We already saw that *bhakthi* without action is not viable in the beginning stages and only *bhakthi* with action is possible. So these people at the beginning stage are in need of people who have gone one step above them for the tasks of gathering them in a *sathsanga*, conducting group worship in temples, doing *bhajans*, conducting discourses of *sath upadēsā* (valuable words of advice and wisdom), etc. People who desire to be released from the *samsārā* and who need to perform *karmā* aimed at cleansing their minds for this purpose have certainly gone one step above those who stop with just doing *Īswara bhakthi* for the sake of enhancing their worldly life. Therefore, the former could do all the above tasks to involve the latter in *bhakthi*. In addition to helping cleanse their minds, it will also help the world by spreading *bhakthi*.

For Order in Worldly Life

In the continuous drama of the universe, will everyone end up being a mature *bhaktha*? No, not really. Only a few, rare individuals will want to become such a ripened bhaktha and transcend to *mukthi*. All others will have to go higher up only in gradual steps after a lot more of the daily grind. Therefore, in addition to spreading *bhakthi*, some order must also be brought to this worldly life itself. One must attain this order through the path of dharma rather than getting swept away by the rapids of *adharma*. After this, the people should be guided to direct their thoughts away from this world towards the causal matter of this world.

The very first requirement is to bring order to the mundane worldly life itself so that it doesn't stray away. This should be achieved by truthfulness, straightforwardness, love, charity, service, etc. Such actions are called dharma. Dharma has many meanings, including religion itself, but the most common meaning is the way in which worldly life is made harmonious, drawing the people's mutual help and then channeling it towards spiritual inquiry with love and truthful virtues, creating a disciplined order. This dharma must be practiced by weaving it intricately with *karmā*. That is why the Pūrva *Mīmāmsā Śāsthrā*, which gives so much prominence to *karmā*, begins, '*athāthō* dharma *jijnāsā*' - 'let us inquire about dharma.' After mastering dharma, the *Jīvā* should exhaust all his past *karmā* by doing the *śāsthra karmā*. He should avoid accumulating future *karmā* by doing these *Śāsthra karmās* as *nishkāmyam*. After attaining good clarity of mind by following these steps, he becomes interested in attaining *Āthmā*, giving up the world, dharma, and mind as well. The part of the scripture that helps at that stage, called Brahma Sūthra, which is a *jnānā śāsthrā*, also known as Utthara *Mīmāmsā*, begins, '*athāthō Brahmā jijnāsā*' - 'let us inquire about Brahmam.' I am giving these quotations to demonstrate that the order of worldly life lies only in dharma and *karmā*.

Worldly life can be kept well only by performing many tasks. Perform *yāgā* and through these *yāgās*, invoke the favor of the divine powers for providing the world with good rain, harvest, and so on, to the satisfaction of the people. Through these divine powers enhance good tendencies in the minds of society. Protect the people by fighting the enemies. Collect goods from different regions in one place and trade them for the good of the people. Plough and do other physical labor necessary for the society. All these tasks have to be performed to make social life as a whole function in an orderly manner. Keeping all these in mind, the *śāsthrās* nicely delineate the *varṇas*, *āśramās*, and their respective duties, and food and other rules of cleanliness that are helpful for performing these duties. Such a delineation defined for a person is called *swadharmā*.

In a nutshell, the entire population must be enabled to progress in the spiritual path at least little by little. This can only be a very slow process. Since the worldly drama of *Īśwarā* will keep continuing, only a very few people will be able to escape from this. Even then, the rest should not be simply left to be entangled deeply in *samsārā*, accumulating their *karmā* and *pāpa* by performing actions under the wild pull of the *indhriyās*. They should be set right and uplifted, at least to some extent. The way to initiate this effort is not by pulling saying, 'Come out of *samsārā*.' Didn't I mention that *Bhagawān* Himself has declared, 'It is not that easy for some one to control the pull of *Prakruthi* and conquer it'? Therefore, the initial task is to bring order to the *samsārā* while still remaining in it. Only then does one attain the maturity for leaving it. Bringing such orderly discipline to worldly life is called dharma.

Right now, we are living in a slum-like place. We desire to live in a bungalow. However, despite the desire, we don't have the necessary qualifications such as income, etc. We need to put in effort to earn these qualifications. Until we achieve them, we should keep our slum clean. If we think, 'Oh, we are going to leave this anyway, so let's not bother about cleaning it,' its uncleanliness might cause diseases and afflictions. This could actually prevent us from attaining the qualifications to escape and leave us there to continue to struggle. We have to keep our place of living clean first. Dharma and the corresponding *swadharma karmā* enable us to tidy up our worldly life in a similar manner.

Who are the guides for leading the general public in this effort? They are none other than those who are even more motivated to leave this place. Ironically, the *jnānis*, who have completely renounced the worldly life and have a firm foothold in spirituality, are the common people's best, ideal role model for practicing *swadharmā*. You might not understand what I am talking about. Since the *jnānis* become *Īśwarā's* instruments, He makes them a living model of a human being. Everyone who attempts to progress in spirituality should also serve as a guide to others, even if they are not exactly as exalted as the *jnānis* . They should provide this guidance by properly performing their own *swadharma karmā*.

As far as the *jnānis* are concerned, the fruits of the *karmā* don't matter. In fact, they don't have any inclination to even perform these *karmās*. All they are concerned about is the union with *Āthmā* in a state where *karmā* and thoughts vanish. Nevertheless, they also need to follow *karma yōgā* in order to become qualified for such a pursuit. The elders have designed such a setup that the direct effect of these *karmās* will result in the welfare of the world.

This *karmā* will cease on its own when purity of the mind is achieved through observance of the *karmās* and a single focus of the mind is achieved through *bhakthi*. *Sanyāsā* should be taken up only at the stage where such a cessation occurs on its own. *Karmā* should not be stopped deliberately. *Karma yōgā* simply has to be continued.

Why Not Other's Dharma?

Bhagawān says, 'Do not change the mandate of the prescribed duties that were followed by generation after generation by going off and taking up some other occupation thinking that it is better than your own.' He insists, 'Do your *swadharmā*; do not adopt another one's dharma.' He further says, 'Remaining firmly in *swadharmā*, even dying in the process of performing it, is *srēyas*; *paradharma* (others' dharma) only creates *bhaya*, meaning *samsārā*.'

Why should we not go to another dharma if it seems better? Because the very act of selecting another one, discarding the dharma that came his way, indicates that a person has his own opinion and is acting according to his desire. So this only means one thing - that the individual mind's desire has come in. He is giving room for desire, which is something to do away with. This desire is reflected in the choice exercised by him in selecting something instead of doing whatever that came his way. So the choice, by its very nature of selection based on desire, automatically becomes a *kāmya karmā*. It cannot be made *nishkāmya* just by sacrificing its fruits. The moment he makes this selection based on some aspect that he saw as better than his own, it immediately becomes something that his mind seeks satisfaction in. Any kind of satisfaction sought after by the mind, of course, contaminates it, while *karmā* performed without conscious effort cleanses it.

This reason for prohibiting a switch over to another dharma pertains only to the individual doer's point of view. There is another reason that pertains to the entire world, the society at large. Several tasks need to be accomplished for the sake of the welfare of the world. From teaching, which uses the intellect, down to physical labor, so many activities have to be carried out. From pouring pure *ghee* as oblation into the glowing, sacred fire while reciting *manthrās*, to waging a war against an enemy with a sword, or to catching hold of a thief in a bloody encounter, we need to perform multitudes of occupations. Because all these tasks need to be carried out in an orderly manner, the various *swadharmās* have been assigned to different lines of descendents. It might appear that some tasks are superior to others, but when viewed in the broad context of the social welfare that results from everyone's tasks, all are indeed equal; you will realize that there is no high and low in this. Cessation of occupation of any caste will certainly affect the overall welfare of the society. For society to function properly even the tasks that appear as menial have to be done. If the janitors go on strike, the whole town stinks, and cholera and small pox spread. When he is protecting the society from these ills, how can his *swadharmā* be lower? Therefore, it is wrong to distinguish between high and low instead of doing whatever happens to be your occupation.

If occupations were taken up according to one's own choice, the division of functions among people through heritage wouldn't hold well. Some occupations would be more popular, attracting more people. Others would be totally ignored or filled with the people who are good for nothing. Those tasks wouldn't be carried out properly, and society would suffer in the end. The perfection that is achieved in the practice of *swadharmā* through hereditary qualities, family environment, etc. would not be there. The occupations that the people chose as their desired choice might not be executed perfectly. In addition, the proportion of these jobs distributed among the people might be skewed, giving rise to competition, jealousy, and disappointment. On the whole, things would not happen in a manner that is conducive to the society's well being, and the welfare of the whole world would be affected.

Thus, two grave wrongs become associated with the one who goes to *paradharma*: First is the defect of abandoning *swadharmā* on the basis of individual desire, and second is that such abandonment affects the welfare of the world. After the acquisition of such a blemish, how can one be cleansed and relieved from *samsārā*? It will only lead to deeper entrenchment into *samsārā*. That is why Krishn̄a *Paramāthmā* said, '*Paradharma* leads to fear.'

Only after this, does the topic of the dēvā-*asūra* war that I started with comes in.

Bhagawān told Arjuna, 'Even when faced with death, do *swadharmā*; only that is *s̄rēyas*, which assists in the relief from *samsārā. Paradharma* only increases fear,' Upon hearing this, Arjuna began to think.

What Is It That Pushes One in Pāpa

But there seems to be some force that does not allow us to act in the thought 'Let us not entertain any desire. Whatever lineage we are born in, and whatever stage of life we are at, let us simply follow the corresponding *varn̄a* dharma and *ās̄ramā* dharma without question.' This force pushes man into *pāpa* by blocking the right way and directing him the wrong way. It is not his intellect that leads him this way, nor does he approve of it. Instead, some other force seems to attack him, pushing down like this. 'What is it?' wonders Arjuna. Arjuna recognizes only the fact that something forces people to prefer *adhārmic* actions over *dhārmic* actions, subjecting them to *pāpa*. But he doesn't know what exactly this force is. It appears vague, identified by Arjuna as 'something' - it is not clearly identified.

So he asks *Bhagawān* to kindly reveal the answer to him.

'atha kēna prayukthōyam pāpam charathi purushā: |
anichchannapi Vārshn̄ēya baladhiva niyōjitha: ||'

'atha:' - 'Even then'. 'That is, even if the *Jīvā* intends only to do the *swadharmā* that happens to be assigned to him by the *sāsthrās*, keeping his mind like dead wood without allowing any desire as you just said...'

'ayam *purushā*:' - 'the one that is this *Jīvā*'. '*Purushā*' can also be elongated as '*purushā*'.

'Even then, this *Jīvā*' -

'anichchannapi' - 'involuntarily'. 'Though not consciously desiring, not picking up one and discarding the other after careful analysis of likes and dislikes'

'kēna' - 'by whom'

'prayuktha:' - 'strongly propelled'

'...able to recognize some force pushing him down into the realm of likes and dislikes, but doesn't know who it is.'

[kēna - by whom, prayuktha: - strongly propelled]

'balāth' - 'forcefully'

'niyōjitha iva' - 'like being pushed'

The root word of *'niyōjitha iva'* is 'yuj' - 'yōj'. 'Yuj' means 'to be joined or fastened'. 'Yuktham' is based on 'yuj'. *'Yōgām'* is based on 'yōj'. Because it fastens the mind without letting it scatter, it is called *'yōgām'*. The word 'yoke' that denotes the object that a bull is connected to comes from this very root. You might link and fasten something in order to control it. The bull, of course, is connected to the yoke to direct it in the field. The mind is similarly collected and fastened to direct it towards *Paramāthmā*. So the *yōgā* that fastens it also implicitly contains the propelling force. 'Yōjitha' denotes the state of being propelled. The 'ni' prefix to a word modifies it in two or three different ways. One of these ways is to stress the basic word's main meaning.

'Pātham' means 'to fall'; 'nipātham' means 'to have a significant fall'. '*Dharśanam*' - 'that which is seen'; '*nidharśanam*' - 'that which is seen clearly'. When '*yōjitha*' is prefixed by 'ni' as 'ni*yōjitha*', it means 'strongly propelled', as being pushed down.

'A *Jīvā*, pushed down forcefully by whom?'

'*pāpa*m charathi?' - 'goes in *pāpa*?' or 'enters *pāpa*?' or 'commits *pāpa*?'

People fall into *pāpa* as though some one pushes them down forcefully - they don't seem to do it on their own.. Who is this some one who pushes down like this?' asks Arjuna.

I said *samsārā* is Dhvaitham, or fear. Whatever generates fear is *pāpa*. Therefore, if going along with *paradharma* is 'bhayāvaha:' it must generate *pāpa*, as per *Bhagawān*'s words. This is why Arjuna refers to *pāpa*.

Leaving *swadharmā* and adopting *paradharma* is *pāpa*. That is one example of *pāpa*, but it is not the only one. There are so many other pāpa*s*. You will know this from the description of *naraka lōka* that lists the thousands of pāpa*s* and the punishment for each one. Arjuna asks only about these pāpa*s*. People commit so many pāpa*s*. Not all of them are carefully thought out, planned, and executed. People seem to do *pāpa* in spite of themselves. Arjuna refers to this phenomenon when he says, 'anichchannapi'. He is asking who makes them do this.

Here, Arjuna only asks which force causes *jīvās* to commit *pāpa*. He does not ask how to release a *Jīvā* from *pāpa*. Had he asked that, *Bhagawān* would have answered, 'Regardless of how many slips he makes, a *Jīvā* need only to hold on to his *swadharmā* and follow it steadfastly amidst all the pāpa*s* to release himself little by little from the *asūra vruththi* that pulls him down into *pāpa*.' *Bhagawān* has already mentioned it to Arjuna. He has already talked about doing *karma yōgā* in *nishkāmya* mode according to his *swadharmā*. In this context He said, 'If you start practicing this dharma just a little bit, it will protect you from the enormous fear of *samsārā*.'

Bhayam, *pāpam*, *bandham* (bondage), and *samsārām* are all the same. Therefore, protection from fear is the same as extrication from *pāpa*.

Now, Arjuna is not asking for a way to be released from *pāpa*. It could be because He had already mentioned it. Then, what else is he asking ? He is asking, 'In the war between the dēvā and *asūra guṅās* (qualities), what is the force that creates the *pāpa vruththi*s called *asūrās* and entices the *Jīvā* into these? Who is the person who thrusts a man into *pāpa*?'

Kāma - *Krōdha*

Bhagawān replies, 'Oh, that! There are two forces that are responsible for that.' He names them, specifying what they are.

'kāma ēsha krōdha ēsha rajō guṅa samudhbhāvā : |
mahāśanō mahā pāpmā viddhyēna - miha vairiṅam ||'

'Ēsha' - 'this'. 'You asked what the reason is. Well, this is what it is'

'Kāma:' - 'desire'. Desire is the root cause that goads all the negative vruthtis that push down a man into *pāpa*.

Is that all? There is yet another one.

'Ēsha: krōdha:' - The other one is anger.

These two are,

'Rajō guṅa samudhbhāvā' - You know the stage where the human mind is neither in the peaceful, *satthvic* mode, nor in the tired, lethargic Thamas*ic* mode, but is very active and turbulent.

Both causes of *pāpa* are born in this Rajasic *guṅa* that is the basis for this stage; '*rajō guṅa* samudh*bhāvā:*'.

I am saying, 'are born' in plural. But *Bhagawān* really says, 'is born' in singular. *'samudhbhāvā:'* is singular. Isn't it a grammatical error to list two things, *kāma* and *krōdha*, and then say, 'is born in *rajō guṅa*' instead of 'are born in *rajō guṅa*?' The error is not *Bhagawān*'s; it is mine. It is I who said, 'besides *kāma*, there is yet another cause called *krōdha*.' *Bhagawān* didn't phrase it like that.

In answering Arjuna's question of 'What forces *Jīvā* down into *pāpa*,' He only says, 'Oh, that! That is, of course, *kāma*, and that is, of course, *krōdha*. It is born in *rago guṅa*: kāma *ēsha krōdha ēsha rajō guṅa samudhbhāvā:*' He has said it in a way that would mean, '*kāma*, which also appears as *krōdha*.' There is no word in that statement that shows *krōdha* as different from *kāma*. We might rephrase it as, 'an evil force that manifests as *kāma* or *krōdha*.' However, since we usually refer to it as a pair, '*kāma-krōdha*' or 'love-hate', I only called it, 'this one and the other' out of habit.

In that case, are *kāma* and *krōdha* one and the same? *Kāma* is the feeling of desire - *Krōdha*, on the other hand, is a hostile feeling. How can these opposites, like and dislike, be termed as one? The act of discarding *swadharmā* is out of dislike, or the feeling of 'I don't want'. But the act of adopting a *paradharma* is out of like, or the feeling of 'I want'. How are these two the same?

They are indeed one. If you think carefully, you will understand. You will understand that the same *kāma*, when unfulfilled, takes the form of *krōdha*. When we desire something and can't have it, anger arises. If we dislike some one, it is because he acts contrary to our wishes. A hurdle in the path of the fulfillment of our desire becomes dislike. If something comes in the way of fulfillment of our desire, we get angry at it. We dislike and abandon *swadharmā* because it stands in the way of our desire to do *paradharma*. It is the same for any other desire. Hatred develops because of desire. Let's say we throw a ball - consider this as the flow of our desire. At that time some obstruction, say a wall, comes in the way. Immediately the ball returns to us. *Krōdha* is just such a rebounding force.

Āchāryā's *bhāshya* describes *kāma* and *krōdha* the same way, as just one. *Āchāryā* says, 'It is the same *kāma* that manifests itself as *krōdha* when it goes through '*prathihatham*'. '*Prathihatham*' means to bump against something and rebound.

However, in practice, we do refer to desire and hatred as two though since they appear as opposite feelings.

Bhagawān Himself says in another context (2-62),

'Kāma*th krōdhō (a) bhijāyathē*'

(Anger is born from desire)

In *Bhagawān*'s answer to Arjuna's question, we see that He mentions *kāma* and *krōdha* as though they were two separate things but then implies that this is not so by referring to them in singular.

In another place (16-21), He talks about not one, not two, but three things. He just said that *kāma* and *krōdha* impel one into *pāpa*. What really happens to us because of *pāpa*? - *samsārā*. *Naraka vāsa* (life in hell) is even a more torturous experience than *samsārā*. It is this *naraka* that He mentions in the context of these three things.

'thrividham narakasyētham dhvāram nāśana - māthmana: |'

'The doors to the *naraka* called *Āthma nāsanam* (destruction of *Āthmā*) are three fold:'

What are they?

'kāma: *krōdha*s - thathā *lōbha*:'

'They are *kāma*, *krōdha*, and *lōbha*.'

What is '*lōbham*'? It is actually an aspect of *kāma*. From the desire that one wants to go to the beach the thousands of desires that exist in this world are all simply *kāma*. Even the highly noble desire of the great *Mahāns* to attain the knowledge of the Self and become that Self is referred to as '*Āthma kāma*' by the Upanishads! Among these various kinds of desires, the desire for material wealth and property has this special name called '*lōbha*'. We refer to a miser, who can't bear to part with his possessions, as a '*lōbhi*'.

Thus, even though '*lōbha*' is a part of *kāma*, *Bhagawān* refers to all of them here as 'thrividham' - three kinds: First is *kāma*, second is *krōdha*, and the third is *lōbha*.

All the Evils Spring from Desire

The first three of the six internal enemies, called 'shadripu' are *kāma*, *krōdha*, and *lōbha*. The remaining three are *mōha*, *madha*, and *māthsĀryā*. If you think about it, they are also born from desire. What is *mōha*? It is the state of remaining under the spell of something, losing one's mind over it, due to one's desire for it. *Madha* is also based on desire. It is vanity and haughtiness over indulgence in objects of desire and the arrogance that results from the satisfaction when a desire is fulfilled. *MāthsĀryā* is jealousy. Why do we become jealous of some one else? It is because the other person has something that we don't have. When we are deprived of something, such as money or influence, we feel jealous. The desire to possess what is missing is the cause of *māthsĀryā*. So all the six internal enemies have the same root, desire.

Therefore, to end the dēvā-*asūra* war that is constantly afflicting us, we have to get rid of the *asūra* called *kāma*, the root enemy. The only way that *Jīvā* can attain the peaceful state is through the destruction of desire.

'Recognize *kāma*, the *pāpi*, the glutton, as your arch enemy, and fight him: *mahāśanō mahā pāpmā viddhyēnamiha vairiṅam.*'

Instead of referring to *kāma* in neuter gender, He calls it 'him', 'glutton', etc., in a personified form. The principle of the *Paramāthmā* Itself has manifested as *Krishṅā.* This principle, personified with eyes, ears, nose. etc., in the form of Krishṅa *Paramāthmā*, has come down in order to uplift the *jīvās.* Since He is such a personification Himself, He feels that He should refer to the evil power, which pushes down the *Jīvā* into the pit, as a person as well and makes such a reference. He is the power of dēvā; it is the power of *asūra.*

He calls *kāma* (*krōdha* is also imbedded in him) 'mahāsana and mahā *pāpmā*'.

'Mahāsana:' - 'big eater'. '*Āśanam*' means food. '*Āśanā*:' means 'one who eats'. *Agni* (fire) is called '*huthāśanā*' since it consumes '*āhuthi*' (oblation), he is named as such. '*Mahā Āśanā*:' - 'one who eats a lot', a stout fellow who demands, 'give me, give me' and devours everything. Just like that, *kāma* is devouring objects obtained through the *indhriyās* over and over.

He is '*Mahā pāpmā*'. '*Pāpmā*' just means *pāpa*. The Upanishad says 'apahatha *pāpmā*' when it describes *Āthmā* as devoid of *pāpa*. Just as he refers to *kāma* as a person, He also refers to him as '*pāpmā*' to mean *pāpi* or *papāthmā*. *Kāma* is no ordinary *pāpi*, but a '*Mahā pāpmā*' - a grave *pāpi*. Arjuna has asked who pushes *Jīvā* into *pāpa*. That is none other than this *kāma*. Therefore, *kāma* must be the personification of the '*Mahā pāpa*'.

'You must recognize him as the greatest enemy in the *samsārā*' says *Bhagawān*. '*viddhyēnam iha vairiṅam*'.

'Iha' - the 'iha' part of the 'iha-para', or the *samsārā*.

'Ēnam' - 'himself'. That is, *kāma* himself.

'*Vairiñam*' - 'as enemy'. That is the primary enemy in the dēvā-*asūra* war, the *asūra*.

'Viddhi' - 'know'. That is, recognize.

'The war that you have to fight now against the Kaurava army is for the sake of the world. The war that you have to fight for yourself is against this evil army headed by the *asūra* called desire, who takes the place of Dhuryodhana' says *Bhagawān*.

All right, we now know that all the hardships are caused by desire. Though desire seems to provide great comfort to the mind, and though we try to fulfill our desires to obtain this comfort, we see that the same desire is the cause of a multitude of hardships, too. *Āchāryā* says in his *bhāshya* that desire is the cause of all the afflictions of living beings. If unfulfilled, it is anger. When desire makes us clutch on to our possessions with no involvement in charity, philanthropy, or help, destroying the qualities of compassion and benevolence, it is *lōbha*. When desire makes us lose our minds over such closely held possessions, it is *mōha*. When desire is actually fulfilled, it is the arrogant *madha*. When we desire something in some one else's possession, it is *māthsāryā*. So desire is the root cause of all the ways the *asūrās* drag us into *naraka* through *pāpa* after *pāpa*.

Whichever way you look at it, desire is a great villain - If fulfilled, it produces *madha*; to the object so obtained, it produces *mōha*; when we keep a miserly hold on this object, it produces *lōbha*. If unfulfilled, it produces *krōdha* and *māthsāryā*.

So now we know. That is, all difficulties are because of *kāma* alone; the root *asūra* for all hardships is none other than this *kāma*. We desire comforts, but we end up getting caught in problems and great discomforts.

Happiness Itself Cause of Hardship

We fall into problems pursuing comforts. We develop a desire for something and let it grow, thinking that it gives us pleasure, while in reality, we beget grief on its account. Not only do we beget grief when the desire is not fulfilled, but the fulfillment itself causes grief. How is that? Our grief is caused by the worry that we might lose what we got from the fulfillment of that desire. Also, an associated fear sometimes comes true. A cherished object that we obtained disappears. Our beloved passes away. A thief steals our money. Or our bank becomes insolvent. Or even if the money is not directly stolen, it loses value due to inflation. We lament, 'Oh, no! We tightened our belt and saved all this for buying a house and conducting a marriage. Now these savings are not enough even to buy the land and not enough even for dowry.'

Though we desire something for the pleasure that it gives, we have to endure so much hardship even to obtain it. If we want to see a movie and enjoy it, we have to stand in line for a long time with legs aching. Then we have to sit in the stuffy place, watch the movie with the bright lights irritating our eyes and the loud sound piercing our ears, resulting in head ache and irritation of the eyes. If you want to watch and enjoy a cricket game, I believe you have to camp out there the previous night itself, lying down in the dampness of the night, disregarding hunger, and going through so much trouble to secure a place. Similarly, it seems you have to pay a hard price to get any desired experience. This is true even for noble desires. If you desire good things such as seeing *Vaikūntā Ēkadhasi* in Sri Rangam or *Ārdhra Dharśanam* in Chidambaram, you have to endure so many hardships such as getting bumped and shoved in the crowd, standing all night in the cold and dampness, getting all numb and stiff, and so on. You come to this mutt with the desire to watch the *pūjā* and receive *thīrtha* (holy water) - a good desire, of course. But then, I make you wait till two or three in the afternoon and inconvenience you while you starve all through. Even the performance of *yōgā*, *sādhanā*, etc., which are done due to the desire for a good purpose, involve a lot of difficulty. Getting into *padmāsana* hurts as if the leg is about to break! If you want to do *pūjā*, you have to procure a particular flower or leaf for one deity, another kind for another deity, one kind of *naivēdhya* (food offering) for this one, and another kind for another one and so on. There are even higher levels of hardships such as fasting, *anga pradhakshiṇā* (circumambulation using the whole body, rolling over the ground around the temple), ritual piercing, etc. In that case, don't we need *sādhanā*, watching festivities, going on pilgrimage, and performing *pūjā*? I'll get back to this topic of suffering on account of desiring good things, later. What I am trying to say here is that whatever kind of desire it may be, 'as the desire keeps coming, so does the misery'.

Bliss and Satisfaction

What causes desire ? It appears only because we seek '*santhōsha*'. '*ānandhā*' is actually a more appropriate word than '*santhōsha*'. We associate '*santhōsha*' with happiness, bliss, and joy. But that is not quite correct. '*Santhōsha*' really means satisfaction. '*Thōsha*' means satisfaction, and a deeper satisfaction is '*santhōsha*'. *ānandhā* and satisfaction are closely related and yet aren't the same thing. *Āthmānandha* is the complete and ultimate state of being. Once this is attained, no other entity is capable of generating any dissatisfaction. Only in this state do *ānandhā* and satisfaction become one and the same. In all other stages, we do see a slight difference between *ānandhā* and satisfaction. When a gentle breeze blows, we say that we feel *ānandhā*, not satisfaction. Usage of the word 'satisfaction' is apt only when referring to the fulfillment of an expected desire. Something that is attained unexpectedly is only a matter of *ānandhā*, not satisfaction.

Desires and Pleasures and Pains

I meant to say that we desire something only because it yields *ānandhā*. But this desire may yield only grief without any *ānandhā*, a little bit of *ānandhā* and a lot of grief, or both in equal measure. Unlike all these cases, sometimes *ānandhā* comes on its own without any desire on our part. However, this *ānandhā* doesn't last forever either. After a little while, it disappears and again our wories catch hold of us and hurt us. Even if we had not known *ānandhā* we would be carying on. Because it appeared briefly and then disappeared, we long for it to come again.

Some one goes to a betting race, thinking that it will bring money and *ānandhā*. He loses even what he already had and cries.' This is a desire that gives no *ānandhā*, only grief. Hoping to get *ānandhā* through the eyes and ears, he goes to a movie and a music concert. The movie ends up being horrible. Featuring ghosts and murders, it gives the creeps and shivers. Frustrated and miserable, he thinks, 'In the name of *ānandhā*, why did I buy this trouble paying a heavy price? What a waste of time and money!' In the other scenario, the musician had a sore throat. It was so out of key. What would be the state of the person who went to the concert? He goes to a restaurant to enjoy tasty food to attain *ānandhā* through the mouth and nose. There he is served something cold and stale. Having come anyway, he ends up eating it reluctantly The misery doesn't end with just that. It is followed by dizziness and vomiting also. Desiring to achieve *ānandhā* through touch, he stands under a cool shower. It turns out to be ice cold and freezing. He catches a cold and headache. These are all examples of seeking *ānandhā* and ending up with misery instead.

Man Destroyed by All Five Senses

There is a great book of wisdom called '*Vivēka Chūdāmaṇi*' written by our *Āchāryā*. One of the *slōkās* in this contains a reference to this topic of the five sense organs. *Āchāryā* gives examples of five animals each of which perishes due to one sense organ only.. Then he says how man alone is ruined by all the five senses on. He cautions us and himself feels sorry for this state.

The deer is destroyed through sound. The hunter blows a horn. While the deer stands still, mesmerized by this sound, he shoots an arrow and kills it. The elephant heads for its destruction on account of touch. A strategy called 'khedda' is followed in the jungles. There, they dig a huge ditch and cover it up by loosely spreading bushes and vines on top. To catch a male elephant which is on one side of this ditch, they tie up an already subdued and trained female elephant on the other side. The male develops a desire for the touch of the female. Driven by that infatuation, it runs over the concealed ditch and elephant falls into the pit and gets trapped.

The moth is destroyed through sight. It is attracted by the glow of a lamp, flies into it on its own, and dies. The fish loses its life on account of taste; it desires to eat the worm that is kept as bait on the hook and dies. The bee meets with its end on account of smell. There is a kind of a large sized flower called 'champaka' which has such a strong smell that even we start having a nosebleed by smelling it. Captivated by this fragrance, the bee lands on the flowers. Then, all the petals of this flower slowly close in and the whole flower becomes a closed up bud. The trapped bee perishes. *Āchāryā* says that in this manner, each animal attains 'panchathva' (death) by each of the 'pancha' (five) *indhriyās*. He then pities the human for the way in which he gets ruined by all five of them.

'śabdhādhibih: panchabhirēva pancha panchathvam -
āpuh svaguñēna baddhāh |
kuranga māthanga pathanga mīna brungā narah
panchabhi ranjithah kim ||'

'kuranga' means deer 'māthanga' means elephant. 'pathanga' means moth. 'mīna' means fish. 'brunga' means bee.

'nara:' - human. 'panchabhi' - by all five. 'anchitha' - attracted. *Āchāryā* has ended this with 'kim' with great compassion. 'kim' means 'what'. This 'kim' with great compassion should be interpreted to mean, 'Oh, no! How captivated this human being is, by all his five *indhriyās*! What to do?'

Permanent Bliss Will Not Result from Desire

However, we shouldn't be so pessimistic and say that desire is fully destructive all the time. Most of the time, we derive at least a little bit of *ānandhā* mixed with some misery. Even if some one turns to drinking liquor that ruins the brain, the body, and the family life, he might derive some pleasure at least while drinking it. Restaurants don't always serve stale things cooked in reused oil. They might also serve tasty things which please the tongue. Even then, the bill for that food and the spiritual harm caused by food cooked in impure ways might actually cause misery more than pleasure. If a musician has a good voice and is in the right mood while singing, we feel that the price paid is worth it. Here the pleasure and misery are equal. The misery is the price paid for the ticket. If he sang so well that it makes us feel that he deserved a lot more than what we paid, the pleasure is actually more than the misery. If we got a free pass for the concert and the musician also gave a superb performance, then it would be all pleasure and no misery!

True! But did this pleasure last forever? Let's say some one wanted to go to the concert instead of feeling dull and depressed, contemplating this gloomy *samsārā*. He was able to get a free pass, too. And the concert was good. He enjoyed listening to it. But when he came back home, did that *ānandhā* remain the same? He was looking forward to cheering himself up, sharing and critiquing the concert at home. But his wife had a long face since he was late coming home after strolling all over the town, His *ānandhā* disappeared and he became dull and depressed again. When he went to bed, it was sultry and the mosquitoes were biting. At that point, would the *ānandhā* from the concert come back to give an iota of comfort?

Similarly, there are indeed some people who actually win horse races. But does the *ānandhā* brought by the money stay forever? Actually, so many troubles arises from this money itself. Money and possessions are the cause of many problems, leading man into wicked ways. There are certainly some rich people who manage to lead their whole life in comfort in this world and pass away. But they too have to answer for all their misdeeds in *Paralōka* (the other world), misdeeds done for the sake of acquiring money, or in using that money to bribe some one, or in driving away some one who begged for alms, etc. It is impossible not to go through at least some suffering on account of material desire.

Even the fulfillment of a desire that gives pure *ānandhā* without any misery and grief lasts only for the time being. Even if the shower is very soothing, you cannot stand under it for long. No matter how wonderful the musician's performance is, beyond five or six hours, it becomes boring and you start feeling that you should go home.

Badham khīr is delicious. But how many cups can you drink? After two or three cups, the stomach gets stuffed. If we are offered more, we plead with the host, 'Oh, no thank you, please!' Are those two or three cups any good, at least? If we had stopped with one, it would have been nourishing to the body. The two extra cups taken just for quenching the desire results in stomach upset.

We are unable to limit the object of our desire. We keep wanting more and more. Even the bookworms who read all day get a little tired of it after a while. They toss the book away and go out for a short walk. Is at least the tiredness permanent? Are any of these desires for music, food, reading, or any one of the myriad desires that we have, fulfilled for all time? That is also impossible. What we dismiss today with 'that's enough' comes back tomorrow with an increased craving.

Affected by Situations

There is something strange. We saw that desire for something is generated because of the *ānandhā* that it gives. Not only do we get tired of it after enjoying it for a while, but in certain situations we develop dislike for it. Something that gives *ānandhā* at one time doesn't always give it at other times. No matter how tasty an item is or however much it is our favorite, when we are afflicted with fever, the same thing turns out to be so unappealing. We turn down with disgust the very same thing that we normally run after with a passion. When afflicted with an eye sore, we close our eyes in pain without seeing what we normally go searching all over for. Take a fine Kashmir woolen shawl. During the month of Mārgazhi (December - January), we use it, appreciating how comfortable it is. Then the month of Chithra (April - May) arrives. It is still the same shawl. But is it comfortable now? No, even its touch is irritating like fire.

A Desire That Overwhelms Another Desire

Sometimes we also see that a new desire overwhelms an existing desire and robs us of the pleasure from the first one. Consider a concert given by a favorite musician for which we are also able to get a free pass. But then, if a close relative had a surgery that day, or if 'something' happened to him, would we feel like going to the concert? What happened to the desire for music and pleasure now? One desire ate up the other. The desire for the welfare of the relative superseded the desire for music.

We who call ourselves adults are still like a child who drops his toys and runs to us if we offer him chocolate.

Say some one desires to have the Lord's *dharśan*, and he goes to the temple. He is waiting there for the procession of the deities, which is not going to start for a while. Meanwhile, he overhears that the final showing of a movie that he wanted to see is also on the same day. Immediately, he gives up waiting for the procession and leaves for the movie theatre. Or, it could be the other way too. He starts out going to the movie. Then he hears that the temple procession is on the same day. Immediately he drops the movie plan and changes his course towards the temple. Whatever be the case, on the whole, no single desire is permanent. One desire lets another one consume it. It is also not get satisfied for ever. It comes back with renewed vigor and catches hold of us.

When afflicted with a lot of problems, we abandon the cinema desire and take up circumambulating around *navagriha*, going to *Pil̲laiyār*, etc. We feel like attending a *puranic* discourse. When we are in comfort again, we become bubbly, lose interest in these things, and develop a desire for cinema or some other entertainment.

Different Kinds of Desire for One's Own Body

Even within our own body, we like one part more than another. In general, we love our body more than anything external. In fact, with the exception of the *jnānis*, all of us associate our body to the very term 'I'. When we say, 'I am fair, or dark; I am short, or tall', etc., it is obvious that we think of our body as 'I'. We get annoyed even at people whom we consider over dear if by mistake they step lightly on one of our toes. This is because we have so much desire for our body. This desire exists because the body provides all our pleasures through the sense organs. We apply soap and perfume and decorate it with silk and so on.

Suppose a finger gets infected and develops gangrene followed by fever and delirium, we are afraid that it might spread to the whole hand. This is the same finger that we used to decorate with rings embedded with diamonds and *navarathna* (nine kinds of precious gems). But now we agree to have it amputated. So within our own body, we desire one part more than the other. When some one steps on our toes, we get so annoyed. But if we develop diabetes and it causes a sore in our leg that becomes incurable we even agree to the amputation of the whole leg for saving the life.' A medication prescribed for a heart condition specifies some dietary restriction, such as eating no fat, etc. When a patient follows it, it means that he loves his heart more than his stomach. If an injection for TB has a side effect of creating a blockage in the ear, he thinks, 'Let the ear go, please save the lungs.'

The force of desire also seems to leap from one thing to another.

Let's consider one who has a great desire for money. He also has a great attachment for his only son. He is not sure himself which one he desires more. Let's say the son develops some series disease, He travels the length and breadth of the country to get it treated. All his wealth is spent away. So he realizes that his son is more important to him than the carefully accumulated wealth. That is, his desire for the son is greater than his desire for his money.

There is an expression 'Īshañā thrayam' - or 'three desires'. They are, '*Vitthēshañā*', '*puthrēshañā*', and '*thārēshañā*'. '*Īshañā*' is the kind of desire that sticks very hard, the way cooked food sticks to the pan. '*Vitthēshañā*' means 'desire for money';

'*puthrēshanā*' means 'attachment to children'; '*thārēshanā*' means 'infatuation for the wife'. This gentleman seems to have a stronger *puthrēshanā* than *Vitthēshanā*, considering how he dispensed all his wealth to treat his son's polio.

Then his son was cured. But his wife passed away and he got married again. What happened was that, lending his ears to his second wife, he drove away his son whom he had so much cared for earlier. Again, one desire swallowed another. *Thārēshanā* superseded *puthrēshanā*.

Then he developed some stomach ailment. After a lot of treatments, it was cured. But the doctors said, 'From now on, you have to eat small quantities of rich, nutritious items such as *badham halwa*, milk *khoa*, etc.' Since he had already spent all his wealth, he started eating these expensive items all by himself secretively, out of his wife's sight. So his self-interest superseded *tharēshanā*.

Later, he came to realize that even among the things that he associated with his own self, he favored one thing more than the other. He then had a heart attack. His diet was restricted, prohibiting the fatty items of *halwa* and *khoa*. He gave them up immediately. Even within his own body, the desire for his stomach gave way to the desire for his heart.

In this manner, within our body itself, we have more attachment to one part than another. We desire the sense organs such as the tongue, ear, nose, and eyes more than the limbs that perform actions such as the arms and legs. A gentleman developed a problem in the eye. They said that a particular medicine for it might affect the nervous system and cause pain in the leg, making it difficult for him to walk around. He said it was OK and got his eyes cured, knowingly inviting trouble for the legs. This is an example of how *jnānēndhrīyās* (sense organs) are dearer than *karmēndhrīyās* (organs of action).

At another instance, he agreed to have an injection to save his life even if that could damage the eyesight.

Life supersedes all the organs. That is why he is willing to spend all his money and get treated even if he has to be kept in a coma for long. Even in a comatose stage, a stage in which he is not even aware of his life, he is left with his desire for life.

Mind is in between Āthmā and Sense Organs

I must talk about one entity that comes before life and after the organs of actions and senses. It is a very important entity for a *Jīvā*. This is the mind. It is the mind that experiences all the indulgences of the organs. However, it is also capable of having its own experiences without the instruments of the organs. The way in which the mind feels pleasure, fear, misery, etc. through its own various imaginations belong to the latter category. Feelings such as pleasure on account of a marriage, grief on account of a death, fear on account of being haunted by ghosts, jealousy on account of hearing about a neighbor winning a lottery, etc. are produced directly in the mind (not necessarily through the organs). The *Jīvā* is not unaware of the mind as he is of life. Man, who gives more importance to the pleasures of sense organs than the pleasures of the organs of actions, gives supreme importance to the pleasure of the mind, much more than that of all these organs. Why does he go after drinks, ganja, and drugs? While being intoxicated, he impairs his vision, hearing, and speech, harming the sense organs; he staggers around, harming the organs of actions; and he ends up in a ditch and rolls over there. Then he slaps himself hard. Why is he doing all these? What for? He is subjecting his dear body to this much hardship because of some pleasure that he perceives in his mind while intoxicated. It is this pleasure of the mind that he goes after in that state, while losing not only the organs of action and senses, but also the brain, the very organ of the intellect. Motivated by his desire to forget all his worries and feel the sense of pleasure in his mind, he falls prey to this intoxicant. This motivation is so strong that he forsakes even his intense attachment to the brain and the other organs and is prepared to suffer the humiliation before the whole town.

All right, I'll come back to the same question again. Did that pleasure last forever? However much it is consumed, the intoxication gets cleared at some point, and the pleasure vanishes. The stomach is ruined, the family is ruined, and all the pāpa*s* of such ruins fall on him as a big load. What he did for the sake of pleasure now haunts him by way of the load of *pāpa* and gives him immense grief and hardship. It is nothing but 'pāpam charathi *purushā*:'!

Mind's Pleasure Not Permanent Either

Even the pleasures experienced through the mind, the thing that is dearer to man than all other organs, become tiring beyond a certain level. A novel that some one reads may be very enjoyable. But even after going to bed, his thoughts are still hovering around this same novel and sleep evades him. Similarly, some other thing that he had enjoyed deeply such as a particular *rāgā* sung by a musician, a *pūjā* performed by some *Swāmigal*, etc. hover over the mind all night. Of course, the mind enjoys them. There is no expense involved in this, nor does it involve any effort exerted by his arms or legs; there is no other difficulty. But what if the same thoughts keep continuing beyond twelve and one o'clock? Are they desirable then? He feels irritated, thinking, 'Oh, what a nuisance! This is not letting me fall asleep.'

We identify the mind as our true self and are prepared to give up everything else for its sake. But even the pleasure of this mind becomes a nuisance at one stage and we desire to simply go to sleep, shedding the awareness of everything just as though we are dead. Is there even a slight pleasure for the body, mind, or the brain during sleep? No! Even then, there is a desire for this. If we miss sleep for a few days, the body, mind, brain, and everything become weak and sluggish. Consider some one who is living in royal comfort, lying down on a silk mattress on a marble balcony under the flood of moonlight. A cool breeze is blowing, his dear wife is sitting close, playing soothing music on the *veena*, and the fragrance of *atthar* (incense) is wafting by. Despite all this, after a certain stage, he simply wants to go to sleep, which will actually make him unaware of all these pleasures.

Unlike the other desires and pleasures that become tiring after a certain stage even while experiencing them, sleep is the only state that the one doesn't get tired of. Well, he is sleeping without the awareness of any feeling. How can he get tired then? But after waking up, if he still feels sleepy and yawns, he feels irritated and thinks, 'Oh, what is this blighted thing? I am again feeling sleepy. Let me get rid of it by pouring water on my head.' That is, even the desire for sleep or its pleasure tiring.

Tired of It But Not Rid of It

Each desire gets to be tiring at some stage. However, none of them is completely got rid of. After a short while, they march back with a vengeance. The *Jīvā* is in need of the things that provide him comfort and fulfill his desires over and over again. He becomes a slave to them and an addict. Once he becomes a slave, misery is inevitable.

If he were only used to a shower bath, would he be able to get it everywhere? Would some one who enjoys music be able to listen to music of high quality all the time? Some one who has a taste for poetry and literature would be able to come upon a literary work of high quality only once in a while. But he is not able to stop reading since the habit has formed. None of the books that he picks up give any satisfaction. However, if he stops reading, it becomes dull and depressing. Such misery is caused by the fault of habit, which is created by desire. This is not simply limited to the race courses, wine shops, gambling houses, and even coffee clubs. Desire for anything drags him along with a great pull and makes him thirst for more and more of the experience of pleasure derived from it. Whatever he expects - he doesn't always get it of a quality that meets his expectations. At those times, only disappointment and misery result. If that desire were not there, the misery wouldn't be there either.

If we desire a very specific thing and revel in it, whenever it is not available we feel its absence very deeply. Other things even if they are very similar to it, don't quite measure up to it and we are not able to enjoy them. If a particular *rāgā* or composition were some one's favorite, even if a musician gave a great performance on many other *rāgās* and many other compositions, receiving the accolade of the entire *sabha*, this person alone would whine that the *vidhvan* didn't sing his favorite pieces!

This is so even in the case of God and saints. If he were attached to a particular deity in a particular place, whenever he went to any other temple, regardless of the crowd of bhakthas there, he alone wouldn't be fully satisfied, if a reverential bond were formed with some particular saint, regarding him as a great *Mahān*, when he saw any other *Mahān*, he would moan, 'Hmm, he is no comparison to the other one!'

Furthermore, even for his favorite deity, no matter how beautiful the alankaram (decoration) was, he might miss a particular alankaram which he likes. Even when his favorite *swamiyar* gave a superb discourse on *Gītā*, he might feel that '*Vivēka Chūdāmaṇī*' would have been better. All these are examples of how a desire for a specific thing and the pleasure derived from it deprive one of many other possible pleasures.

So, are we able to hold on to our favorites forever? Of course, not. Only once in a while will it become available, if at all. When it is not available, nothing else becomes enjoyable; we feel an inexplicable discomfort. We even get angry at times.

When taking ganja or a narcotic drug becomes a habit the fulfillment of this desire ruins the body and affects the brain. But even if one attempts to quit this habit, I believe that he is agonized tremendously and even driven to suicide.

That is, even after realizing the evils of a desire, it is still difficult to give it up.

Then there are some other things that come on their own and provide unadulterated bliss even when we don't have any special desire for them or go in search of them. For instance, to relax a little bit, we go to the beach or perhaps the roof terrace and sit down. We didn't realize that it was a full-moon day. But looking up, we see the beautiful full moon; the moon is showering its cool says. This pleasure is attained without any desire on our part. To get this pleasure, we didn't have to go through any difficulty. We are not going to face any harm even after this experience. All these are fine. But how long does this pleasure last? Even during the time it exists, which is all night, are we able to simply watch it the whole time? At the most, we can do it for an hour. Does the pleasure stay after that? Even so, having seen it today, a little habit has started forming. We look forward to seeing the moon tomorrow also. But it is not like today in shape. We keep waiting for the next full moon impatiently, which is only going to come after a whole month. In this case, even though we didn't start with a desire to see the full moon, after deriving the pleasure from it, the pleasure itself created a desire for it. Thus, even the pleasures that come by unexpectedly create a desire to expect more and more of it later. Since no pleasure is permanent, the underlying object of pleasure is available only sometimes, and at other times it makes us long for it helplessly.

This holds true not only for the unhealthy desires, but even for noble desires. If a *bhaktha* obtained the experience of the presence of *Īśwarā* for a split second before He disappeared, the desire to see Him again would turn the *bhaktha* mad and wild. This is described as a very exalted form of anxiety due to separation. Under the spell of this emotion, the saint Manikkavachagar and Sri *Krishṅa* Chaithanya wept, finally falling down unconscious. Even in the last century, *Sri Ramakrishṅa Paramahamsa* appeared to have had similar the same experience.

Misery in Everything Except Adhvaitham

Īśwarā hasn't created anything capable of giving everlasting pleasure. Even when He given dharśan it doesn't last and give eternal pleasure. He has teased even people like as *Nāma Dēvā* and *Sundharamurthy Swāmigal*, who were privileged to see Him everyday, by withdrawing from their presence every now and then, leaving them to cry for Him. Radha is said to be Krishṅā's life itself. Even she was left to suffer the agony of separation from Him. So acute was her agony that it was as though her whole body would get shattered into pieces. In His design, it seems desire for something must lead one to sorrow. Perhaps He is doing this to demonstrate that anything other than Adhvaitham is only laden with misery, including the pleasure derived from Him, as long as He is viewed as an external entity, since this external view is not eternal.

Those who lose their minds in literature, music, sculpture, etc., always restlessly search for works of high quality on par with whatever they have already experienced. This restlessness, the intense search, and the resultant running around, all denote only a lack of peace, hence misery.

The vices work the same way too. They fan the flame of desire more and more on those who taste them once. Finally coming to their senses, these people just repent in humiliation, saying, 'Oh, no! How low have I descended!'

Even by Subjecting Others to Hardship

Another huge fault associated with this is that we even go to the extent of subjecting others to any amount of hardship to derive our own satisfaction from the experience of the object of our desire. Just because we desire something tasty, we feel it is all right to make the elderly mother toil with the grinding stone. We want to subject others to several such hardships and torments just to fulfill our desire. All these will be credited to our *pāpa* account and we will have to pay for it in the future with interest.

When we analyze it carefully, we realize how we derive our own satisfaction through others' misery in ways that we don't even recognize as such. It works so deviously (this is what we call *Māyā*) even in supposedly well-intentioned endeavors. What is the philosophy behind public service and helping out others? It is simply our desire to bring happiness to others even if it means subjecting ourselves to hardship. However, even in this service, rather than satisfying others, deriving satisfaction for ourselves becomes more important in our heart of hearts, though we don't realize it as such. We can't count on having our pet community projects all the time. During such a lull, when we are unable to be of service either physically or financially, those of us who are used to being involved in community service tend to brood, thinking, 'Oh, we are wasting time without performing any service today.' If some one were to come by at such a time and plead, 'I am struggling in poverty. Please help me with five or ten rupees,' the philanthropist feels happy to be of service. If a demand for service arose because some one had a bad fall and needed first aid and to be carried to the hospital, the philanthropist again feels happy to be of service.

If he introspected on this, he would realize that this desire for service and its fulfillment depends on some one else's hardship in poverty or mishap, though his is not conscious of it, nor would it be acceptable to his conscience. In other words, he expects some one else to suffer in order to fulfill his desire of alleviating some one from his suffering. 'He expects' doesn't mean that he does it with his conscious mind. No philanthropist would consciously think, 'some one needs to suffer so that I get my opportunity to serve.' However, in the heart of hearts, such a thought does seem to be hiding.

After returning from his service during a massive flood relief operation or some such thing, he might feel a bit let down, thinking, 'Tomorrow, I won't get to run here and there and be of service to hundreds of people.' If he were to think like that, it of course implies a slight tinge of mourning the loss of such an opportunity to satisfy the soul by being of service. In the case of a desire for things that are less noble than the likes of public service, this feeling of deprivation becomes quite pronounced and makes him trouble others even consciously for the fulfillment of his own desire.

Let's say that we set our minds on something and desire it, but it goes out of our hands. We focus only on the satisfaction that we derive from it and want to regain it even at the expense of some one else's trouble.

Desire gives rise to many such wrongful thoughts.

Up until now, I have been elaborating a lot on the hardships and miseries that people with desires go through. But these hardships and miseries pale in comparison to those of the others, which are inflicted by the people who have these desires. How many murders are committed because of desire! When kings and nation heads such as Hitler and Mussolini desired expansion of their territory, how many *lakhs* of people had to die on account of it? The murders, robberies, assaults on women, and other crimes that are committed are all because of desire.

These sufferings that some one inflicts on others for the sake of his own desire won't spare him. They all get accumulated in his *pāpa* account and eventually get back at him with double vigor in *naraka lōka* and several of his re-births.

Desire That Harms Noble Virtues

Among the things that take the form of *pāpa* and come back with a vengeance, lying is the most important one. It is desire that gives rise to numerous lies. Desire is seed of lies.

Right from Manu onwards, all great people have specified *Ahimsā* (non-violence), *sathya* (truthfulness), non-thievery, cleanliness, and control of the senses as the five noble virtues that all people must possess. Desire is of course capable of destroying all five of these.

Why do we commit violence? It is because of the desire for meat and because of the desire for things that are in the possession of some one else. This desire drives us to resort even to violence to get it from them.

Why do we abandon truthfulness? It is because sometimes we cannot attain a particular thing that we desire by truthful means. That desire could be any one of the following. We might have to save ourselves; we might have to save our property, our status, our honor, or some such thing. These desires cause all the lies we speak and the corrupt actions we perform.

No explanation is necessary for the statement that stealing is because of the desire for things.

Abandoning the ritual cleanliness is also because of the desire to enjoy comforts at the whim of the mind.

I don't need to mention that control of the senses is lost because of desire.

In short, the one thing that makes us flout all the five great *dharmas* mentioned by Manu is in fact desire.

Therefore desire is the birthplace of all the *dhōshās* (flaws) such as the root of all the six internal enemies and the uprooting of all the five *dharmas.*

Uninterrupted Bliss Not Available to Mind

In the daily battle of the *dēvās* and the *asūrās* that takes place within us, the breeding ground for all the *asuric* powers or the bad *vruththis* that destroy the *daivic* powers or the good *vruththis* is in fact desire.

Even what appear to be good desires that provide noble pleasures in reality cause only suffering. Because whatever the desire might be, it is only a kind of itch. The itch that arises from the dissatisfaction of the mind is called desire. Desire is only the thirst that the mind develops. Where there is desire, it only means that there is a mind. The existence of the mind is actually a cause of hindrance. The mind is a second thing or a different thing from *Āthmā*; therefore, it is a cause of fear. We have already seen this. It is this mind that binds the *Jīvāthmā* in a small self-contained bundle when the infinite *Paramāthmā* dons the garb of *Jīvāthmā* by condensing itself. The separate *jīvās* identify themselves as individuals only with these separate minds. Therefore, the mind can only be different from the *Paramāthmā* at all times. Even at a very high level, it can only be touching and converging on the *Paramāthmā* or be filled with some portion of the *Paramāthmā*'s power and grace. However, it just cannot become one with His infinite, expansive form and enjoy His eternal bliss. Only if this mind were dissolved into Him and ceases to exist would the eternal bliss be attainable.

Even the supreme bliss that is experienced in *Vaikūntā* or *Kailāsa* is an experience attained through the mind. The Dhvaitha and *viśishtādhvaitha* philosophers say that this is an eternal bliss with no misery mixed in it. Even then, we infer from the *Purānās* that these *mukthas* were also subjected to some griefs and deficiencies at least some of the times. They are not in the completely fulfilled state eternally because they are still different from the *Paramāthmā* and experience Him with a separate mind. Starting from *Ambā̲l* Herself, followed by *Mahālakshmi* down to *Nāradā*, *Sanakādhis*, and even great *rishis* such as Bhrigu are sometimes with a mind that is separate from *Paramāthmā*. In this mode, they seem to be subjected to grief, anger, and curses, be separated from *Paramāthmā*, go through great sufferings, take birth on the earth, go through repentance and perform severe *thapās*, and torture themselves and suffer through. This is why *Thiruva̲l̲luvar* recommends making *Paramāthmā* the only target for all desires in order to give up the desires on all the other things.

To End the Battle, Destroy Desire

We are able to recognize a few desires which result only in hardship even while appearing to provide us with pleasure. For instance, scratching an itch, though soothing for the moment, actually increases the inflammation. We know this quite well. So we try hard to keep from scratching ourselves. Any desire is an itch and nothing but an itch. Everything that we do for its fulfillment is only akin to scratching a sore and getting it septic.

What do we conclude from this? Only if desire is destroyed will the dēvā-*asūra* war that is raging inside terminate, and we will attain peace.

How do we destroy it?

There are desires, of the order of hundreds, thousands, and *lakhs*, existing all around. If one is subdued, another one rears its head! If we proceed to tame the other one, the first one comes back in full form, challenging us, 'See, I'm not dead just yet!'

Will Death Destroy Desire?

All right, desires spring up only because the body exists. Desires which cause us suffering and make others suffer, cause fear and make others fear, cause humiliation and humiliation others, etc. arise only as long as this body exists. Do people have any suffering, fear, or humiliation after they die? Thinking along these lines, shall we pray for our death? No, this is not the solution.

It is wrong to conclude that the dead do not have desire and the resultant fear, grief, and humiliation either. The dead are not gone for ever. They go to the hell to suffer for the pāpa*s* committed due to desires while they were alive and come back to this world.

In other words, only that particular body is gone. Another body takes its place at once. It could be another human body, going through the same problems again with the same desires. It could be the body of a bull and suffering under the plough. Or it could be the horse pulling a load. Thus the body and the suffering that comes from it cannot be got rid of by death.

It's even worse when death is due to suicide. The additional *pāpa* on this account gets added on and even more painful punishments have to be undergone. These days, some people resort to shooting themselves by a revolver when facing capture after committing a major crime or when facing some unbearable, intense grief. But this is not a way to get rid of the ills and sufferings caused by *samsārā*. Even when the gross body is destroyed, another kind of a subtle body will still survive. This body will be in the form of the *Jīvā's Anthahkaraṅa*. This

Anthahkaraṅa is the reason for his past deeds and thoughts; it is the one that experienced all these thoughts and deeds; it is there to experience the results of the remaining *karmās* after the death. It also serves to hold on to the roots of the past tendencies so that the same ones will continue in the future. When the *Jīvā* gets rid of the gross body through suicide, he will have to roam about with his subtle body.

If he doesn't commit suicide and his life leaves the body on its own, the subtle body of the *Jīvā* goes to either *naraka* or *swarga* (heaven) and reaps the consequences of his *karmā* to a certain extent. It then comes back to the earth to experience the fruits of the remaining *karmā*. It takes birth within one of the eighty-four *lakhs* of species on earth. On the other hand, the spirit of the one who commits suicide must experience hardships even worse than that of *naraka* for the sin of *Āthmā hatthi* (killing oneself) right in this world by roaming all over. Before the sequence of going to *naraka* or *swarga* followed by returning to the earth can begin, the subtle body has to keep roaming restlessly as a ghost. Unable to quench hunger and thirst in that form, it must catch hold of some one else's body and control it, accumulating that *pāpa* also. This is not the end of it. A new birth will come again. Whatever charges that he was afraid to face and committed suicide to avoid will happen again in the new birth, and he will have to face the humiliation again. Whatever failure he was unable to bear that drove him to shoot himself will come back, and he will have to face it again. Or whatever disease he couldn't tolerate and escaped by consuming poison to kill himself will afflict him again in this new birth. So whatever one tries to escape from through suicide is really inescapable. He only accumulates more punishments for the act of suicide in the form of many tortures while in the ghost form.

This is why *Āthma hatthi* is considered a grave sin by the *Dharma sāsthrās*. According to the current law also it is considered a crime.

The Punishment of Birth

In one sense, being reborn even after a natural death is like the whiplash which used to be the punishment in the olden days before humane punishment became the accepted form.

Similarly *Bhagawān* is giving us a body to reap the consequences of our past pāpa*s*, and then gives us problems, which are analogous to whipping. When He feels that this body can't take it any more, He ordains death, puts us to temporary sleep. Then He makes the same life be born again for the childhood there is not much weight of sorrow.

Among all the sufferings that we endure as adults, only about a quarter of them are experienced as sufferings. The remaining three-quarters are brooding over the experience of those sufferings. As if brooding over the actual grief is not enough, we also worry about the possible offshoots of it and feel weighed down even more. In contrast a child forgets everything the next moment and it doesn't have the complexities of life either. In general, childhood goes on merrily with playing and being pampered. *Bhagawān* has provided childhood for us in the same way as the criminal was nourished with food so that he could withstand more whiplashes in the olden days.

The Sweetness of Neem Fruit

Nobody indulges in bad actions all the time. Since they do perform some good somewhere, there is a little bit of pleasure that occurs in between. This pleasure is like applying ointment for the lash wounds. Somewhere, some one happens to be full of puṇya (good *karmās*), and for him, it is all sandal paste smearing rather than whiplashes. But that is quite rare. Ninety percent of us have committed pāpa*s*. So if our pleasure were one part, the pain would be ten times as that. At best, the pleasure we enjoy in life is only like the sweetness of the neem fruit. It is true that the neem fruit is a little sweet in comparison to the raw neem. However, can it ever become as sweet as a mango ? Just as when we eat this neem fruit, which is mostly bitter with only a slight sweetness, amidst so many hardships, we get a little bit of pleasure. This is all we deserve. Or, we might say that *Bhagawān* is already showing His benevolent grace more than what we deserve.

So, if desire is the sole reason for all these, and if that desire won't go away even if this body is destroyed, then what exactly can we do? How can we escape from this?

Constant Effort is Necessary

Even if desire does not diminish attempts should be made again and again to put it down. Continuous effort should be made to achieve *vairāgya*, the desireless state.

If only we could get rid of this one enemy, namely desire, by going through whatever trouble it calls for, we would then become like the king, the eternally peaceful king, the one whom no desire or bother would dare approach.

It is of no use trying to tame several hundreds and thousands of bad *vruththis* one by one. It is an impossible task. They are analogous to the branches while desire is analogous to the root. If this single root is cut off, that is enough. But cutting off the root, which is buried under, is much more difficult than cutting off the outward branches. Nevertheless, if we didn't do that, the trimned branches would keep on sprouting up again and again. Therefore, this has to be accomplished somehow.

The termite starts its attack. We destroy it. We break it up. A week later, we see that it has come back again. We knock it off again. Few days later, it comes back up again. How do we end this? As long as the queen termite is there, it will keep on building its nest tirelessly. Only if we locate it in some little hole or crevice where it is hiding can we dig it up there and destroy it. Then the nest will cease to re-appear. Likewise, if we don't destroy desire, which is the queen termite of all the miseries and bad *vruththis*, and instead try to set right each and every misery and try to get rid of each and every bad *vruththi*, all those attempts will only be in vain. Until the cause is destroyed, it is not possible to destroy the effects permanently.

Bhagawān gives this upadēśā when He refers to *kāma-krōdha* in singular that is *krōdha* as a part of *kāma*.

'kāma ēsha krōdha ēsha rajō guña - samudhbhāvā: '

I have already explained the meaning of this.

'mahāśanō Mahā pāpmā viddhyēnam iha vairiñam'

I gave a little bit of an explanation for this.

This *kāma* demands huge feeding: 'mahāsana'. Feeding it just once, or satisfying the desire just once, doesn't satisfy its hunger completely. Well, having just one meal doesn't keep the stomach full forever. Day after day, we do have to eat three or four times. Likewise, the hunger of the desire also doesn't get satisfied no matter how many times it is fed. It rises up again. Then *Bhagawān* chides the desire as '*Mahā pāpmā*' - a great sinner. Isn't this the breeding ground for the entire army of our pāpa*s*, that is, the army of *asūrās* or bad *vruththis*? - Hence '*Mahā pāpmā*'. *'viddhēyanam iha vairiñam'* - *'viddhi ēnam iha vairiñam'*. In prose order, this would be read as, *'iha ēnam vairiñam viddhi'*. 'Iha' - in this world, in the *samsārā*; 'ēnam' - this, this *karmā*; '*vairiñam*' - as a foe; 'viddhi' - know it. He says, 'In this worldly life, know that *kāma* is the biggest foe'.

What Desire Does and Adhishtānā

Then He continues on. He describes its vile form and action as, 'Just as the way in which smoke hides the fire, dust hides the glass, and the womb hides the fetus, *kāma* surrounds *jnānā* and hides it.' After saying this, he again reiterates, This is indeed the greatest enemy of a *jnāni*. The unquenchable desire which is like a buring fire is surrounding man's intellect.'

First He said that desire is the smoke that hides the fire of intellect. Then, thinking about how it scorches some one like fire, He said, 'Like fire, desire is taking hold of the intellect.'

He adds further:

In order to be active, an entity has to root itself firmly in a place and only from there could it show its might. Such a place, where something takes root, is called '*adhishtānam*'.

Upon hearing this word called Adhishtānam, you might recall that a *sanyāsi's samādhi* (place where buried) is also called *adhishtānam*. You might wonder why it is called by this name.

When great people attain *siddhi*, a ray of their power of grace will remain in their body even after the life energy has left it. The place where such a *Mahān's* body is buried will serve as a place for this blessing ray to take root and flow to the *bhakthās*. Hence such a *samādhi* is called *adhishtānam*.

In actual practice, at some places they keep *thulasi* on the *samādhi*; at other places, they consecrate a *Śiva Linga* over it. The place where *thulasi* is placed is usually called a *brindhāvanam*, and the one where a *linga* is placed is called *adhishtānam*. Even among the *āchāryās* of our own mutt, two elders who attained *siddhi* in Kalavai have *brindhavanams* with the *thulasi* and the one who attained *siddhi* in Ilaiyatangudi has an *adhishtānam* with the consecration of a *Śiva Linga*.

Bhagawān talks about the *Adhishtānā* where desire gets itself rooted - not just one, but three such *Adhishtānās*. To torment the *Jīvā* in and out, desire has occupied his *indhriyās*, mind, and intellect and has made these places its *Adhishtānās*. He says that it drives the *Jīvā* down into *mōha* (infatuation) and hides *jnānā*.

He says, 'Arjuna! Tame and control yourself well and win over and kill this desire-*pāpi*.' (He again says *pāpmā*)

Simply explaining and describing all these is not enough. We find that we are unable to kill it. The very thing we wish to avoid doing and suppress the desire for it forces itself up again.

Arjuna's Difficulty

Subdueing desire and subdueing the mind are one and the same. This is because the germinating ground for desire is the mind. Arjuna laments that it is forcefully dragging the *Jīvā*, who is unable to tame it.

> *'chanchalam hi mana: Krishṅa pramāthi balavadh dhridam*
> *thasyāham nigraham manyē vāyoriva sudhushkaram* '

Arjuna says, '*Krishṅā*! This mind is constantly vacillating; it is simply churning the *Jīvā* like anything ('māthi' means 'to churn'. In 'amrutha mathanam', the 'matha' denotes the churning of the ocean of milk. 'Pramāthi' means 'greatly churning'. The *Jīvā* is simply churned by the mind's thoughts. The churning is powerful and firm. Just as the wind cannot be captured and held back, I feel that it is also impossible to control the mind.

'thasya' - this mind's; 'nigraham' - subdueing; 'vāyōriva' - like the wind, that is, like taming the wind; 'sudhushkaram' - that it is impossible to achieve; 'manyē' - I think.

Remedy Suggested by Krishṅā

Bhagawān cheers up the lamenting Arjuna by saying, 'As you say, subdueing the mind is indeed difficult. Yet, it is not impossible to achieve.' He starts in a sympathetic tone as though agreeing with him. Then He shows him a way to achieve what he was about to give up as impossible. He gives hope and describes,

'aśamśayam Mahābāhō mano dhurnigraham chalam '

'Chalam' means 'sanchalam' (vacillation). It is indeed impossible to tame the mind that is constantly moving around. 'Dhurnigraham' - impossible to tame. 'aśamśayam' - there is no doubt. He says, 'Arjuna! (He calls Arjuna as *'Mahābāhō'*. Since he is a great warrior, referring to the strength of his shoulder, He calls him 'Mahā bāhō'. The underlying principle is that he should become a great hero internally as well, just the same way as he is known in external warfare.) No doubt, the mind is vacillating just as you mentioned. It is of course not easy to tame it.' He agrees with what Arjuna has said and then explains a remedy for it.

He is talking about a very important thing: He says that you can achieve the dissolution of the mind if you persevere in *abhyāsa* (practice) and *vairāgya* (not giving room for desire).

Bhagawān consoles him, saying, 'However much it struggles to get away, and no matter how much it drags you off course, do not give up the attempt to control the mind. Try to drag it back to your ways every time it runs away. If you keep persevering in your fight back, it will start becoming tame some day. You can finally achieve victory by applying the two strategies of determination not to desire anything and the constant practice to stand firm no matter how many times you slip and slide.'

'yathō yathō niścharathi manaś chanchalam asthiram
thathasthathō niyamyaithadh āthmanyēva vaśam nayēth'

'yathō yathō' - whatever, for the sake of whatever desire; 'chanchalam' - that which keeps moving around; 'asthiram' - doesn't stay firm in anything; 'mana:' - the mind; '*niścharathi*' - that which keeps going out; 'thathasthatha:' - from every one of those (desires); 'ēthath' - this mind; 'niyamya' - drag and subdue;

'āthmani ēva' ('*āthmanyēva*') - in *Āthmā* itself; '*vasam nayeth*' - should keep under control. However much and for the sake of whatever desires the mind runs out over and over, on each such occasion you must drag the mind back from each such desire and subdue it and make it stay within *Āthmā*.

Āthmā: The Changeless

Bhagawān has now brought the discussion to the true form of *Jīvā* called *Āthmā*.

When the *Jīvā* is considered exclusive by itself, it appears as though the mind is the same as the *Jīvā*. The *Jīvā* has its own individual characteristics that is one is fair, with one's own name, place, father, mother, education, job, traits (such as hot-tempered vs. at peace, cheerful vs. whiny, smart vs. simpleton, etc) and all these defining characteristics are due to the *Jīvā*'s identification of himself with his mind. That is, the *Jīvā* thinks that he is what he knows of himself through his mind.

When the same person is in deep sleep, unconscious under chloroform, or in a *samādhi* state while practicing the *yōgā* nishtā, the mind doesn't work. He has no thoughts. He never recognizes any characteristics about himself. In this stage, all *jīvās* are equal - both the king and the pauper are the same. The king, asleep, unconscious, or in *samādhi*, is not aware of any of his royal greatness. The pauper doesn't experience his struggle with poverty then either. This mindless state keeps everyone, be he a strong wrestler, a weakling, a great scholar or a totally inept school drop out, all in exactly the same state without regard to their individual traits or characteristics. Does he who is asleep with an inactive mind know anything such as his name, place, loved ones, or foes? He doesn't even know whether he is a man or a woman, old or young, and so on. All the millions and millions of people who have hundreds of thousands of individual characteristics when the mind is active, exist as one entity when it is inactive - yet, they exist; not constrained by the differentiating characteristics, they exist as the true 'I'.

This is the most important aspect. In the stages of sleep, unconsciousness, and *samādhi*, a person doesn't cease to exist; he is very much alive. The thing that remains with him even in that stage is what is called *Āthmā*.

This *Āthmā* does not have death at all. Nor does it have any change. In a way, change itself is death too - you'll understand it if you think carefully. 'Death' means, 'cease to exist'. It is also 'becoming unreal'. When we say a flower transforms into a raw fruit, then a raw fruit transforms into a ripe fruit, or a worm transforms into a wasp, etc., the flower, the raw fruit, the worm, etc., cease to exist. Only in their place, did the raw fruit, ripe fruit, and the wasp appear. That is, even the change that we call growth has a kind of destruction or death within it. Only by the cessation of one form does another one grow and take shape.

Our body changes too. The body that we had in childhood is different from that of our middle-age one. Changing in so many ways and growing, the child's body becomes the body of the middle-aged man. Then old age follows. The one that was changing so far due to growth begins to change due to deterioration. Skin changes and wrinkles. Hair changes and becomes gray. Though we don't recognize it, the changes are occurring every second. The body keeps changing, say the doctors and physiologists. That is, even though we think this body is 'I', it keeps changing each second, or dying! Then, aren't we still considering the same body as 'I' that just died a second ago? How is that? What was the last second? From the body of a baby who couldn't even walk forty or fifty years ago up to the present body, we consider all the intervening bodies that had kept changing - or dying - as 'I'; how come?

The same way, I have been talking about the constantly vacillating mind all this time. In other words, it is constantly changing, or dying. One second it feels grief, the next second happiness, and the following second anger. How different the changes are with regard to the mind's growth and the intellect's growth from the days of the childhood! In the ripe old age, these same developed states wear out and come to rest. That is, the destroying force that is in the form of change never stops. Change is called 'vikāram'. In Tamil, this term seems to denote 'ugly' or 'grotesque'. The reason is when such a change occurs, the entity's original form gets destroyed. If an entity lies destroyed, it is an ugly sight, isn't it? However, in all the examples that I cited, it doesn't end with the destruction of one entity. It transforms into something else. The flower doesn't just cease to exist; it becomes a raw fruit. The raw fruit also doesn't just cease to exist; it transforms into a ripe fruit. The worm doesn't just cease to exist; it becomes a wasp. There is some kind of life principle that exists as the basis of the flower and causes the flower to lose its form and to become a raw fruit, and then staying as the basis of this raw fruit, it again transforms into a ripe fruit. Since the flower is hanging on to a live tree, it happens like this. If that same flower were plucked from the tree, it would simply wilt and perish. In that case, it doesn't become a raw fruit. The same way, the underlying life principle that is the basis for the worm remains as the same basic life principle with the wasp even after destroying the form of the worm. If we crush the worm, or if a bird eats it up, it is simply destroyed without becoming a wasp.

Similarly, when our body and mind keep getting destroyed and take up new forms, the fundamental underlying life principle for all these forms is what is called *Āthmā*. Life principle doesn't denote breath. Even after the breathing stops, *Āthmā* is not destroyed. The principle of life that makes the body live by means of the breath is *Āthmā*. That is our true 'I'. How can our true 'I' be the body or the mind, which existed last minute but vanished this minute. It is something that becomes false each second! The one *Āthmā* that is without such changes, as *nirvikārā*, remaining the same all the time is the true 'I'. Through all the changes of the body and the mind, in all those stages, the feeling of 'I' is the only unchanging thing. Therefore, discarding and rejecting all those stages, if we separate out this *Āthmā*, which is the fundamental 'I' sense, the fact that it is our true form falls into place.

Without the conscious feeling of the body and in the absence of the mind's activity while in deep sleep, unconscious state, and the *samādhi* nishtā, *Āthmā* alone exists as such.

It is an unchanging entity. Is there any difference in the feeling of 'I' during childhood and that of the present? Of course not! Consider the following stages: during ignorance and after enlightenment; while being afflicted with a disease and after becoming healthy; during poverty and after acquiring wealth. Similarly, when the body and the mind are both subjected to various hardships as well as comforts, though all these stages keep changing in various ways, there is only one thing that stays as a whole in only one way. That is the feeling of 'I' in all of these forms. What has changed and what is still going to change can't be called 'I'. Staying as the underlying support for all these stages, *Āthmā* is the one that sequences all these stages into one connected life without letting each of these forms scatter away and perish. As *Bhagawān* said, '*sūthrē maṅiganā iva*', *Āthmā* is like a thread that goes through several beads to make it into a chain of prayer beads. This *Āthmā* is the true 'I' in us.

'Nija' Āthmā and the Mind in Guise

We interpret 'Nijam' as 'that which is true'. The actual meaning of 'nijam' is 'innate nature'. In both these senses, *Āthmā* is the true 'I'. We who are ignorant of this are actually ignorant of our own true nature under the influence of the mind's disguise. The mind puts on a mighty disguise to the extent of fooling us into thinking that it is our true 'I'.

This is not just a single disguise, but a number of constantly changing disguises. In Palani, they perform several *abhishēkams* for *Dhandāyudhapāñi* in quick succession, during which they close up the curtain, do the *alankāra* (dressing up), and then open up for *dharśan*. In one *alankāra*, He will appear as a mendicant. Few minutes later, when the next *abhishēkam* and alankaram are finished and the curtain is raised, he will appear as a king. After yet another alankaram, He will give *dharśan* in the form of a hunter. The same way, our garbs also keep changing. Right from birth, (or since conception, or going even further back into several previous births) when our body and mind go through changes, each such change is only a guise. Nevertheless, we, who as babies were donning no clothes, chewing old sorts of things, squealing and playing, are the same now fastidious and trend-conscious 'us'. This 'I - consciousness' is a continuous, unbroken strand that has been unchanged from those days to this day. Underneath this thought, the single thing that exists as the basis of our life is this *Āthmā*. We, as well as the others, do recognize the fact that the one that was in the form of a baby back then is the same as the one that is in the current form of the 'I' today. This is only because of *Āthmā*, the single unchanging basis for all these guises.

One actor plays several parts in cinema and drama. He might appear as *Rāmā* in one and appear as Rāvañā in another. He might be a rich man in one and a destitute in another. Though the parts change, the person assuming the parts is the same one. Similarly, in the drama of our life, *Āthmā* is the real person who dons every single one of these guises that we put on. The very fact that there are multiple guises implies the existence of a real person who is external to these guises so that he could put them on.

Just as the actor resides in his house after removing the costume, makeup, and all that, *Āthmā* exists in *sushupthi* (deep sleep) and nishtā without the paraphernalia of the mind and body, which are its costume and make up. Since it is alone, detached from the body and the mind at that time, it is completely at peace. Only at this time does a *Jīvā* exist without the dēvā-*asūra* war, the allegorical description of the tug-of-war generated by the thoughts and actions of the mind. This existence of *Āthmā* all by itself without the accompanying frenzy of the mind is the only stage in which the *Jīvā* is spared of desire and the ensuing tribulations. This is the very stage that is called *praśāntha*, or the great, peaceful state.

Mind's Activity Only Through Āthmā

It is rather strange that the mind, which knows no peace, actually has no power to perform any action without the presence of this totally peaceful *Āthmā*. What is mind's work? It is nothing but thinking about something or desiring something. Though *Āthmā* is devoid of thoughts and desires, without this life principle, the mind cannot think. The body acts only in close accordance with the mind's thoughts (desires in particular). The mind does direct the body into various tasks. However, the mind is able to function only through the power of *Āthmā*. Yet, in its solitary state, *Āthmā* is totally peaceful, giving no room for *śakthi* (power). Even the term *'Āthma Śakthī'*, which is popularly used in magazines and discourses, is really a misnomer if you think about it carefully. Only when something is able to affect something else (in a good or bad way) does its power come into consideration at all. Since *Āthmā* is something that minds its own business, unconnected with anything else, and remains peaceful, power has no relevance to it.

You might ask, 'You are now saying that it is unconnected. But just a while back, didn't you say yourself that *Āthmā* is the underlying basis for the mind and the body to act?'

Māyā

True! Without *Āthmā*, there is no movement. Nonetheless, *Āthmā* is not directly connected to anything. This is what is referred to as *Māyā*. This is not quite understandable no matter how hard you think. Though not really connected to anything, *Āthmā* appears to be connected due to the presence of *Māyā* and conducts all of this drama.

This concept is usually somewhat clarified through one or two examples. All the plants, vines, and trees grow, flower, and bear fruit only because of the presence of the sun. Without the sun, none of these can happen. However, can we then conclude that the sun is planning all of it and conducting the whole setup?

When it is very dark, without any light, we are unable to do anything. So we light up a lamp. In that light some one reads a *Purāñā*. Some one else reads some novel that actually corrupts his mind. With the help of the light, several people perform different kinds of actions. Can we then claim that the lamp is responsible for all these actions? Yet, these actions cannot take place without the lamp. Similarly, without any direct prodding or the karthruthva from *Āthmā*, merely by the significance of its presence, the mind goes on with its actions and gets its jobs done through the body.

State of Being and State of Action

I mentioned that a *Jīvā* is one with *Āthmā* during sleep and *samādhi*, while his mind and body are not engaged in their respective jobs of thinking and activities.

This is the state of being. As soon as the mind and body come back, this 'being' state is replaced by the 'action' state. Did *Āthmā* do anything while they were absent? No, it didn't do anything. It simply existed. This is what is called '*kēvala sthithi*'. '*Kēvala*' doesn't mean lowly. For some reason, this meaning is associated with '*kēvalam*' in Tamil. The correct meaning is, 'to be independent, without being mixed with anything else.' Experiencing *Āthmā* in such an isolated manner, dwelling firmly in it, is called '*kaivalya*'. You might be familiar with the terms '*kaivalya padhavi*' and '*kaivalya mōkshā*'. It means the eternal experience of the unadulterated 'Self' that is freed from the bondage of the mind and the resultant bondage of the *samsārā*.

Each doctrine refers to *mōkshā* by various different names. We, the *adhvaithis*, call it '*Āthma Sākshāthkāram*' or '*Brahma Sākshāthkāram*'. The *śaivas* call it '*Śiva Sāyujyam*' and the *Vaishṇavās* call it '*Vishṇu Sāyujyam*'. Buddha calls it '*nirvāṇā*' or the state where nothing exists, similar to the state of a lamp being put out. The *Nyāya Vaiśēshika siddhānthis* call it 'apavarkkam' or a state without any misery. The Jains and the *yōga śāsthrās* call this *mōkshā* as '*kēvala sthithi*' or '*kaivalya*'.

No sooner does this mere 'state of being' end and the 'state of action' commence, letting the mind sprout up, than all the armies of untoward aspects invade like winged termites swarming out of their nests.

Consequences of the Hunger of Desire

As soon as the mind awakens, its thousand-fold hungers of desire follow immediately, and an army of emotions such as anger, greed, jealousy, grief, and fear also arrive in the process of satisfying these hungers. Do the desires at least get fulfilled? Not really. The actions that are necessary for the fulfillment of these desires keep coming up incessantly one after another and control us just as if we were possessed by ghosts. We perform all these actions only in pursuit of pleasure. But the pleasures that we derive from them stay on, at best, only for a short time and then disappear. Nothing remains as an unadulterated pleasure, for everything brings some misery along with it.

Savory snacks are satisfying. But they also cause stomach pains. This is not limited to the hunger of the stomach alone. The same thing happens in the case of the hunger of the eyes, ears, body, thoughts, wealth, etc. When we see our child playing, it is quite pleasing. When he develops a fever though, four times as much worry than the former pleasure results. Acquisition of a lot of money is pleasing. At the same time, several kinds of worries and fears overcome us. We worry, 'Oh, we might get robbed. Taxes might be hiked up. Some one might come seeking a donation,' etc. We do many other things for the sake of deriving pleasure: we go to work, have children, accumulate wealth, go to clubs, movies, etc. However, in addition to the pleasure that they give, we also get grief, worry, fear, rage, humiliation, jealousy, ego, and so on, in a much larger measure. Are we at least able to hold on to any of these pleasures forever? Not really.

When we develop a desire for something, we worry about how to attain it. If some one else attempts to have the same thing, we get angry on account of his competing for it. If he happens to attain it, we get jealous. If we attain it instead, we feel cocky and develop an urge to humiliate him. We earn some such fault as the net result of a desire. We do derive a little pleasure after attaining the object of our desire. Then it slowly wanes and disappears. Then we repeat the same pursuit and acquisition of fault for the sake of another object.

Without remaining idle for even a second, we keep engaging in action for the sake of attaining some object of desire. As soon as we wake up from sleep and the mind starts up again, we are possessed by this spirit of activity, which drives us so wildly that we lose sense of what peace, satisfaction, and fulfillment are. We occasionally do get some peace and satisfaction through the fulfillment of desire. But the floods of dissatisfaction sweep away even this intermittent peace and satisfaction into oblivion without a trace.

Acquiring and Relinquishing

There is some hardship involved in the effort to acquire something. Then there are many more hardships in keeping it in our possession. If we lose it, we have even more difficulties. To all these hardships associated with the acquisition, the problems of relinquishment get added on as well. In any task, both acquisition and relinquishment come hand in hand. We must acquire what is not there and discard what is not needed. To maintain good health, we must eat as well as eliminate. A trouble-making servant must be removed and a good servant must be procured. Enemies should be got rid of and friends should be acquired. If money needs to be acquired, anything that hinders that effort must be removed. All desires are the same way.

So both acquiring as well as relinquishing have problems. The ingested food sometimes causes trouble due to indigestion, or it creates an urge to want more. If elimination doesn't occur properly, disease results, but excessive elimination tires us out and keeps us bed ridden. The dismissed servant vows to break our arms and legs when he leaves, so we are afraid of him. The newly acquired servant asks for an increment, and he threatens to go on strike. Some one whom we hired at one time must be dismissed at another time. The food that we consume one day is eliminated the next day.

We not only fear our foes but also worry about our friends taking too much liberty with us. (They might feel the same way about us too!) So sometimes we have to relinquish the same thing that we have acquired.

If we keep on analyzing like this, it seems foolish to perform any actions at all.

How great it is when *Āthmā* simply exists by itself without any action! Though we don't know anything about the *samādhi* nishtā, we do know about sleep. How blissful sleep is! How peaceful it is to remain without any action or mind! Tired in spite of all his luxuries, even a king wants to fall asleep every day, away from all the royal glamour. This is due to the fact that when we are one with *Āthmā*, the acquiring as well as the relinquishing are both absent. We saw that *Āthmā* is our true self. How then is it possible for us to acquire ourselves? If we have to acquire ourselves now, are we currently some one else? How can we be something other than ourselves? How can we be some one else? None of this is possible. Similarly, how can we discard ourselves? If so, who is doing the discarding? Who remains after we are discarded? Since we couldn't have anyone other than ourselves within us, we can't discard *Āthmā* nor have any remnant after discarding it. So we can't discard ourselves, nor can we acquire ourselves. Since we always remain as ourselves, nothing new can be brought in.

Lalithā Sahasranāmam mentions a name for *Ambāḻ* called '*Hēyōpādhēya varjithā*' that depicts Her as such an '*Āthma swarūpa*'. '*Hēyam*' means discarded. '*Upadhēyam*' means acquired. She who can be neither acquired nor discarded is '*Hēyōpādhēya varjithā*'. We are wasting away by constantly performing actions for acquiring and discarding things that are only different from us. No action is necessary to simply remain as ourselves. When we remain simply as ourselves there is no bother of any action.

This is why sleep has so much comfort and peace. We exist without the gnawing desire and itch of the mind only in sleep; this is the peaceful state, which is devoid of the dēvā-*asūra* war that I mentioned earlier. Even if we don't deserve it, *Bhagawān*, through His infinite grace, bestows this peaceful state for seven or eight hours every day. Perhaps it is because of His infinite grace towards others that He makes us sleep, in order to keep us from bothering them for these seven or eight hours!

Sleep is Not the Way

Then, is the way to attain peace, with neither dēvā-*asūra* war, the mind, nor desires that sprout from it, to keep on sleeping? Shall we go and buy a lot of sleeping pills and keep on putting ourselves to sleep as soon as we wake up?

No, that is not right.

In deep sleep, the mind's action is absent and only *Āthmā* is present. However, do we really experience the peaceful, blissful state of '*Āthmā*nu*bhāvā*' (experience of *Āthmā*) consciously during sleep? No! Only after waking up, we are able to say 'I had a nice sleep; it was so peaceful.' While sleeping, we do not know this comfort or peace. We just lie down like a log. Reducing ourselves to this inanimate state is tantamount to showing disrespect to ourselves. If some one called us, 'Hey, jada*m* (inanimate)', we would feel humiliated and angry. Is it really becoming for us to do the same thing to ourselves? As a mockery to the great aspect of creation, man shouldn't reduce himself to the state of an inanimate entity by sleeping all the time.

In the order of creation starting from inanimate objects and moving up from species with one sense to the ones with six senses, man is at the top rung. It is true that he gets into a lot of troubles and hardships from this sixth sense. Nevertheless, like a *napumsakā* (eunuch) or a coward, rendering himself as an inanimate object by losing all these powers is totally unbecoming.

In spite of several hardships and troubles that arise from these six senses, a lot of good things also become feasible because of these senses. We are able to channel the mind, the organs of senses, and the organs of actions into several high level philosophical inquiries, music, sculpture, public service, love, sacrifice, and all such noble endeavors. We should strive for such an effort. Rising above these six senses, we should engage in the inquiry of *jnānā* in order to become the one supreme sense. We should not descend to the level of an inanimate object.

Vairāgya and Abhyāsa

As *Bhagawān* mentioned, taming the *asuric* powers by *vairāgya* (Will to stay away from desire) and *abhyāsa* (repeated practice) and enabling the *daivic* powers to function energetically are the beginning of all these efforts.

Training ourselves to stay detached without getting all caught up in likes and dislikes, resulting from acquiring and relinquishing, is *vairāgya*. Ignoring the likes and dislikes of our mind, trying to develop *vairāgya*, we must look to the *śāsthrās* to see what actions it prescribes for protecting dharma and refining and maturing the *Jīvā*. Only according to these *śāsthric* recommendations should we perform actions with focused mind and *indhriyās*. These actions of course involve acquiring and relinquishing, gain and loss, victory and defeat, honor and dishonor, and so on. *Vairāgya* is necessary to accept these with equanimity. We should keep on trying to attain this.

This incessant effort or training is what *Bhagawān* referred to as '*abhyāsa*'. We commonly use the term '*dhēhābhyāsa*' (physical training). How many days, and how many times each day, do we have to do push-ups, pull-ups, etc.? According to the requirements of each *yōgāsana*, how many days of effort and practice are we expected to do in stretching and bending our legs?

Such repetitive practice does make it possible for us to finally get it right some day. The same way, we should drag the mind that runs off in the direction of the *asuric* flow over and over with unceasing effort and practice and channel it in the virtuous aspects that are known as the *daivic* powers.

In this manner, the sixth sense that is above the inanimate stage should be first raised from the level of the animals to the level of the humans and then raised further to the level of the *dēvās*. Following this same practice further up, we should raise it to the level of *Āthmā*, which is even higher, and merge in this single supreme intellect. In the end, we do have to relinquish the six senses since they don't yield eternal pleasure. But such relinquishing should not be through sleep, which simply takes us down to the inanimate stage, where we are not really aware of *Āthmā*'s blissful experience. It should instead be the *samādhi* nishtā, which keeps us well aware of *Āthmā*, without which these senses can't function, since *Āthmā* is the basis for them and above them.

We should only sleep long enough to give necessary rest to the body and the mind, which are tired from constant labor and the thinking process. We shouldn't mistake it for the peaceful *samādhi*.

Blissful of Jñanā Peace

The peace of *Āthmā* is not a void as is experienced at death and sleep. The *nirvāṅā* that Buddha mentioned is indeed this peace of the void. But our *Śankara Bhagavadhpādhā* showed on the basis of the Upanishads that the peace of *Āthmā* attained in the *samādhi* stage is full of bliss and full of *jnānā*. It is the experience of the whole, not that of the void. How could *Āthmā*, the life principle that doesn't get destroyed even after death, be anything other than omniscient and total bliss?

How is *Āthmā* omniscient, or full of knowledge or *jnānā*? When we say that something is alive, this determination is arrived at by the very fact that this something possesses intellect and emotion as opposed to a mere inanimate object. Therefore, *Āthmā*, which is the life of a life, is certainly the chaithanya, where intellect and emotions merge into one. This is called *jnānā*.

I have already mentioned that *Āthmā* is not directly involved with anything. Therefore, there is no external entity for it to know and feel. The only thing that it can know and feel is none other than itself. *Āthmā*, which is unapproachable by the external mind or indhriya, is known to *Āthmā* alone. When the mind suddenly halts in *samādhi*, such a self-revealing *Āthmānubhāvā* occurs. This *Āthmānubhāvā* is not realized in sleep.

How is *Āthmā* full of bliss? If you ask this, I feel like turning the question back to you and asking, 'How else could it possibly be?' How can the one that is totally free with no constraints be anything but blissful? The constraints imposed by the mind, by the *indhriyās*, by other people, places, materials, urges, the bondage of *karmā*, and the bondage of *samsārā*, all stemming from desire, are the reason why we go through suffering. None of this applies to *Āthmā*. At the same time, it is not devoid of intellect and emotions either; it exists as chaithanya and shining . Therefore, it is capable of realizing its unconstrained state and being aware of it. Wouldn't the experience of such a supreme freedom be the highest bliss? When we are able to find short-lived bliss every once in a while even within all our constraints, the bliss of the unconstrained, eternal *Āthmā* will be nothing but supreme bliss. *Āthmā*, which doesn't know anything other than itself, doesn't have the grief, fear, or anger that we usually get from other people. In contrast, it exists with eternal bliss and supreme everlasting happiness.

We all have some one higher up who controls us. Above all other powers lies the power of Nature, under whose reign all of us are caught up. Our supervisor controls us. His wife controls him. *Īswarā* controls everything and everyone, including nature. Even He is under the control of His *bhakthās* when He is in the Dhvaitha mode as *Īswarā-bhaktha*. He is referred to as '*bhaktha parādhīna*' ('under the rule of *bhakthās*'). Where there is Dhvaitham, there is no independence (no *swādhīnam*, only *parādhīnam*). None of us have *swādhīnam*. Unless you have that, how can you have full bliss? Only the Adhvaitha *Āthmā*, which has no other power above to control it, has an uninterrupted bliss (*akhandānandham*). Only one or two droplets of this ocean of bliss are received by the *Jīvā* when he experiences the external objects through the *indhriyās* during the play of *Māyā* - while *Māyā* conducts the life of the *Jīvāthmā* with *Āthmā* as its base.

In reality, there is no bliss in external objects. The brilliance of *Āthmā*, which is inside, is reflected in the *Anthahkaraṅa* (inner organs such as the mind) by *Māyā*. When *Māyā* makes the *Jīvā* attain *pleasurable* experiences through the *indhriyās*, a few of these reflected rays appear as though the bliss is coming from the external object.

External Pleasure is Simply Rays of Bliss from Āthmā

Our *Āchāryā* mentions this concept in a *slōkā* from *Dhakshiṅāmūrthī sthōthrā*. Just like a lamp inside a pot full of numerous little holes, *Āthmā* is inside the body as a light of intellect and bliss. *Māyā* reflects this and sends it out as tiny rays of *jnānā* and *ānandhā* through the *indhriya* openings such as eyes, nose, ears, etc. Whichever objects these rays fall on acquire a little bit of brightness. The *indhriyās* don't realize that they are the ones giving this brightness, and furthermore that the real generator of this brightness is none other than *Āthmā*. They feel very pleased, thinking that these external objects naturally possess this brightness and that they are receiving them by contacting these objects. *Jīvā*, the simpleton, thinks of this miniscule *jnānā* and bliss of *Āthmā* as the knowledge that he gained from the external object and the pleasure that he received from it.

Let's say there is a canopy made of woven palm leaves. Through a little gap in this canopy, a bit of sunlight shines through. When a child looks at this, it probably thinks the light comes from the canopy itself. The child doesn't know all about the canopy hiding the sun and the light from the sun penetrating through a little gap in it. We are in a similar state too. In our body, which hides the brilliance of *Āthmā*, the experiences of the *indhriyās* let a miniscule portion of this brilliance flow through. We, on the other hand, perceive these experiences as coming from the targets of these *indhriyās* and lose our minds over them! How would it work if we attempted to produce light directly from the canopy that hides the sunlight? It is exactly the same way when we attempt to achieve eternal bliss through this body. When the canopy is removed, everything will become bright. Similarly, when the awareness of the body goes away, we can become the totally blissful form that is unique to *Āthmā*.

A little introspection will make us understand that the external objects don't produce pleasure by themselves. If the Kashmir shawl is capable of giving pleasure by itself, it should be soothing all the time. Yet, however expensive it might be and however slick it might be, in the peak of summer, we toss it away even at the touch of it. Isn't it clear that the pleasure is not within the shawl? Say a musician with a great voice and expertise renders an *ālāpanā* for a very beautiful *rāgā*. Does it always provide pleasure? What if we had just received the bad news that one of our loved ones just passed away, and at the same time we hear a heavenly rendering of this musician's performance on the radio? We turn it off, not wanting to hear it at that time, don't we? For some one who is suffering from a fever, would a savory snack or ice cream give pleasure? I can keep giving examples like this to demonstrate that pleasure is not in the external object. Only when the *Jīvā's* mind mixes with it does pleasure arise. When his mind is inactive and detached while sleeping, does any object give pleasure? The mind's pleasure never stays steady. We just saw how it experiences a thousand times as much misery as whatever pleasures it experiences. Just as the canopy lets only a little bit of light in and provides darkness for the rest of the places, the mind also gives only a little bit of pleasure and a lot of miseries. Only if we go beyond the mind's falsehood up to *Āthmā*, which is its basis, can we have eternal pleasure.

Though he is *Āthmā* himself, the eternal form of bliss, the *Jīvā* wanders all over outside, seeking temporary pleasures. Adhvaitha *sāsthrās* compare this to the action of a musk deer. Not realizing that the fragrance emanates out of its own stomach, this deer runs all over the place, searching for the source of this fragrance.

In *samādhi*, where the mind is totally eradicated, this bliss of *Āthmā*, which is full of consciousness, is easily perceived. We do not know what that peaceful bliss is like.

Peaceful Bliss which Mind Cannot Understand

In our current state, which recognizes only the mind and not *Āthmā*, we think that *ānandhā* is a feeling that is full of energy and *sāntha* (peace) is a state wherein all feelings have subsided. You might wonder how bliss could be felt in the peaceful state of *Āthmā* when feeling itself is understood as a form of energy. But how can we expect *Āthmā*'s peace and its bliss to be compatible to the mind and be understood by it? Isn't *Āthmā* an entity that is beyond the scope of the mind? Only *Āthmā* could know what its knowledge, feeling, bliss, and peace are all like. How could the mind know that? Even within our own body, what is perceived by the eyes as a pleasant sight is not understandable, and hence enjoyable, to the ears, isn't it? Are the eyes able to enjoy the music that is pleasing to the ears? If we keep thinking along this line, we will realize that there could be a pleasure that is not understandable to any of our *indhriyās*. While being blissful, it could possibly be peaceful as well.

What is *sāntha*, or peace? It is simply the state of being subsided within oneself and without any movements. The mind's pleasure results only from its experience of something else. Since the mind gets its experience only through its movements towards this other thing, it becomes impossible for it to achieve this state of peace that requires being subsided within itself. In contrast, since *Āthmā* doesn't know anything outside of itself and finds bliss within itself, it also achieves the peace that results from being subsided within itself.

When the mind acquires extraordinary powers and receives superhuman abilities, species such as *gāndharvās*, pithrus, *dēvās*, and so on, who have such superhuman powers, seem to be capable of perceiving much higher levels of pleasures, depending on their level in this order. Such step-by-step levels of *ānandhā* are explained in *Thaithirīya* Upanishad in a chapter whose name itself is '*ānandhavallī*'. Humans are incapable of understanding those pleasures. Can a cow understand the pleasures that humans derive from drinking coffee or listening to a concert? This is similar. Among such *ānandhās*, the ultimate, top- most *ānandhā* is the *Āthmānandha*.

(Parā) Ṣakthī's Ānandhā is Also in the Sāntha Āthmā

One of the names for *Ambāḻ* in *Lalithā Sahasranāmam* is - *Swāthmānandha* - *lavī*- bhutha - *Brahmādhyānandha santhathi*:

It means, 'She who reduces the series of *ānandhās* of all the *dēvatās* starting with *Brahmā* to a minuscule part of Her own *Āthmānandha*.'

The reason that our level of *ānandhā* is so small is because we are under the rule of numerous dēvā-*asūra śakthis* (powers) and being under their control, we have to dance to their tunes. There are very many kinds of *dēvatās* that have more power than we do. Among them there are also tiers of increasing power. The entities of each level remain free of the control of the powers of the levels below it. According to this proportion, each higher kind in this order has proportionately higher levels of *ānandhā*. *Brahmā* is at the final level of these dēvā kinds. Therefore his level of freedom and the resulting *ānandhā* is very high. Even his is not a completely unbounded *ānandhā*. He is also under the control of his father, *Mahā Vishṅu*. Since *Parāśakthi* has control over everyone other than Herself, he is under Her control too. That is why it says that the *ānandhā* of *Ambā̲l*, who is totally unbounded and has no one above to control Her, reduces the *ānandhā* of all the *dēvās* starting from *Brahmā* to a miniscule measure.

Just because the level of *ānandhā* gets higher as the *śakthi* becomes higher, it doesn't mean that *ānandhā* is created by *śakthi*. *Sakthi* and *ānandhā* have no direct connection. A sense of pleasure that arises from the realization that we are able to control those who have less *śakthi*, and that we are able to restrain them, is one that results from wrongful *ahankāra* (ego); it cannot be termed as a proper *ānandhā*. Then how is it that the *ānandhā* increases as the *śakthi* does? It is because the higher up you are, the fewer people there are who are above you and could control you. Therefore, instead of the reason being our ability to control others, it is really because our own subjectivity to control gets reduced, enlarging the boundaries of our own freedom. Say a clerk is promoted to the post of an officer. If he were a nice person, he wouldn't become happy because he could order around his subordinates now. On the other hand, he would be happy because he wouldn't be under the control of an officer now and would have the freedom to take certain actions and make certain decisions.

There are several people holding high positions such as officers. However, far more than the control they have over the clerks, they are themselves under the control of their own supervisors or an M.L.A. They simply lament, 'The clerk is actually much better off than I am; I don't have the freedom that he enjoys.' Therefore, it is clear that freedom plays a higher role than śakthi in providing *ānandhā*.

There are a few who have the run of the place serving as managers in some big companies. They later resign the job and start their own company, which is actually a lot smaller compared to their old ones. When you ask, 'Why did you reduce your income, comfort, and all that and start your own business?' they say, 'Oh, you know, in spite of the big responsibility, income, and all that, I had to obey my directors too much. Because I couldn't stand their control, I wanted the freedom, though it meant taking a loss in other aspects. That is why I started my own business.'

Therefore, the pleasure is only from freedom and not power. Though the pleasure increases along with *śakthi*, it is only because *śakthi* also reduces your own constraints.

That is why, even when the supreme bliss of Parāsakthi is mentioned, it doesn't imply that Her *ānandhā* is due to Her *Mahā śakthi*, but rather Her '*Swāthmānandha*'. That is, Her *ānandhā* is not about *śakthi*, but because She is experiencing *Āthmā*, which is boundless with supreme freedom, She has attained such a great *ānandhā*.

Āthmā and *śakthi* have no relationship. *Sakthi* is displayed outwardly and affects something else in a positive or negative way. *Āthmā* has no outside whatsoever. It doesn't affect anything in any way. *Śakthi* relates to Dhvaitham. *Āthmā* is Adhvaitham. Even for *Parāśakthi* Herself, a very high level of *ānandhā* materializes not because of *śakthi* but because She is enjoying the peaceful *Āthmā*.

Śakthi is full of *guñās* (characteristics) and action. *Āthmā* is *guña*-less and action-less. That is what is called *Śivam*. We use *Sivānandhā* interchangeably with *Āthmānandha*; there is no similar term called *śakthiānandhā*. *Parāśakthi* also has *ānandhā* in *Āthmā* or *Śivam*. Her Sahasra Nāma, it says that She provides this *Śivānandhā* or *jnānā* to everyone, remaining as *Dhakshiñāmūrthī*.

'Dhakshiñāmūrthī rūpinī sanakādhi samārādhyā
śivajnāna pradhāyinī'

The total *Āthmānandha* that is attainable to the great, supreme *Parāśakthi* is also rightfully ours when we reach the state of anubhūthi. When we say *Āthmā*, there is no distinction between the great, powerful *Ambāḻs Āthmā*, the *Āthmā* of us humans, who have only a miniscule amount of power, or the *Āthmā* of even weaker creatures such as mosquitoes, etc. There is only one *Āthmā*. It appears with full power in *Ambāḻ* and with a smaller fraction of power, like one part of several crores, in all others. Though it appears with such an outward difference in the fundamental form where there is no other guise, it is the same in all beings. Therefore, compared to whatever level of *ānandhā Brahmā* enjoys in his Dhvaitha state, we can get a crore times as much *ānandhā* when we experience *Āthmā* in the *adhvaithic* stage.

We cannot understand what that *ānandhā* is like now. Even *Ambāḻ* who is the root of all these actions and emotions is immersed in the *Āthmānandha* that has no outward emotion. This explanation is not within our grasp. It is the state wherein the *ānandhā* is filled with total peace. It is also the stage wherein total peace exits as a feeling, is conscious of itself, and is filled with this experience.

State of Sleep

Unrecognised *ānandhā* is not *ānandhā* at all. Say there is a great poetry book that is lying here. If we are blind, what is the use of it? Sleep is such a state wherein the bliss of the solitary existence of *Āthmā* is not realizable through experience. *Samādhi* is that state wherein the *Jīvā* feels this bliss as the recognized *ānandhā*. *Bhagawān* has very gracefully granted everyone the peace of not knowing misery during sleep. He hasn't granted the *samādhi* state for everyone wherein the *Jīvā* recognizes its peaceful comfort and shines as *Āthmā*. He will grant it only to those who believe in His grace and follow the required practices.

I had said that just as the light of the lamp inside a pot with holes is seen outside in tiny bits, a tiny little portion of the *Āthmānandha* occurs in the experience of the *indhriyās*. This happens when we experience things in the waking state. This example has to be expanded to describe the same in the state of deep sleep. Instead of a pot, consider a basket. Normally, we don't find pots with several holes and we don't find any occasion to place a lamp inside a pot either. But when it is windy, we do sometimes cover it with a basket. Then, through the gaps in the basket, a few rays of the lamplight will emerge little by little. If this is the case during the waking state, how can we describe it for the state of deep sleep. The rattan at the edge of the basket is usually twisted in a certain way. So when it is laid down over the lamp, the edge won't be in uniform contact with the floor and will be a touch above here and there. So if the wind came as a gust, it could go through the basket at the bottom and put out the light. Let's say to prevent this, we threw a woolen blanket over it. Since there would be some very tiny gaps in the blanket's weaving, enough air would go in to keep the lamp burning. But to our view, since the blanket covers the gaps on the basket, the rays of light that were visible before would become totally invisible now. It works the same way in deep sleep. Even though the lamp of *Āthmā* is alive and well inside, a total darkness envelops, unlike the little bit of its brightness perceived through the experience of the *indhriyās*. The bothers and nuisances of the waking state are of course nonexistent in the sleeping state. Even the slight perception of the *Āthmānandha*, which is somewhat like a shadow that is recognized in the waking state, is completely absent during sleep, and as far as the Āthmic experience is concerned, we are in total darkness. What a difference this is, compared to the *samādhi* state, which is the lamplight in its entirety!

Without our conscious effort, sleep simply overcomes us. When we say, 'my eyes are just drooping away,' we recognize sleep as a power that is beyond our control. So it is not in our hands to keep a firm hold of it for ourselves. We say, 'For some reason I woke up in the middle of the night and couldn't go back to sleep no matter what I did. My body is so tired.' So sleep is some external, natural force that is able to control us according to its whims. Even when we seem to bring it upon ourselves through the help of the sleeping pills, it is truly beyond our control.

Dream State

Sleep can actually be brought on through pills or an oil bath. But we can never make it a really deep sleep. The mind is subdued only in good, deep sleep. But many times, we are dragged into various stages of sleep that we call half asleep, quarter asleep, one-eighth asleep, three-quarter asleep, etc. In those stages, the mind is still at work with a little flicker, or even a little brighter than that. It is in these stages that dreams come up. In the waking state, since we function under the guidance of the intellect, we subdue to a certain extent thoughts that are too frightening, too sensual, too sad, or just too nonsensical. But in sleep, since the mind is functioning without the control of the intellect, all these things that were discarded by the intellect are brought out by the mind in the form of a dream. So sometimes we wake up with a start, screaming after some frightening dream or crying. Many dreams come up that make us think, 'What a nonsensical dream! I just mixed up some unconnected events like a lunatic.' Some *Sadhākas* who are striving for *brahmacharyā* (celibacy) with tremendous training of the mind in *bhakthi*, *yōgā*, etc. come and cry to us seeking remedy, saying, 'Oh, I had this unbecoming dream, what can I do?'

So all this makes us realize that sleep is just something that is bound to sweep us away at its own whim, unlike the *samādhi* nishtā that is received as the *prasāda* for our efforts granted by *Īśwarā*, who is above nature. This *samādhi* is something that we can retain for ourselves after strengthening it. But sleep can't be the way to find an end for the dēvā-*asūra* war. Even in sleep, the *asūra* aspects can invade at any time in the form of a dream. Perhaps once in a while, we will get a good dream about *Ambāḻs dharśan* or temple *dharśan*. However, it can turn wild too. Since it is possible for the mind's confusion and the pull of subdued desires to break away and bolt during sleep, it is not true that we could be at peace by sleeping all the time. Since even sleeping pills do not have the power to stop the dreams, we can't hope to get peaceful, deep sleep even with their help. Even if we do manage to get into deep sleep, I have already explained that it is nothing but an inanimate stage and not supreme bliss.

We should simply keep training the mind that keeps running away by drawing it inwards, saying, 'Contemplate *Āthmā*, which is the fundamental basis for us, is inside us, and is action-less.' Only then will the mind keep on thinking, and when it finally falls down tired, we can realize the existence of the one, shining *Āthmā*. We could experience the peace and comfort. There is no other way to achieve this.

'yathō yathō niścharathi manaś-chanchala-masthiram
thathasthathō niyamyaithadh Āthmanyēva vāsam nayēth '

says *Bhagawān*. He says, 'No matter what the mind, whose nature is constant vacillation without standing firm in anything it holds on to and no matter how often it runs away, drag this mind from each one of these distractions, tame it and keep it under the control of *Āthmā*.'

'How Can Mind Come Under Āthmā's Control?

We already said, '*Āthmā* is beyond the realm of the mind; it simply exists by itself without any connection to the mind.' But then what does it mean to say, 'Drag the mind, tame it, and keep it under the control of *Āthmā*?' How can this *Āthmā*, which is actionless and beyond the mind, keep the mind under its control?

All right, *Āthmā* is indeed beyond the realm of the mind and it does have no actions. However, because of *Māyā*, which we can't understand, the same *Āthmā* stands as the basis of the mind too. We just saw that without it, the mind can't perform any actions. If it is true that *Āthmā* is really the thing that releases the mind in conjunction with *Māyā* and gives it the power to run around outside, then we must also accept the premise that it would somehow re-draw the released mind and absorb it into itself.

What is *Māyā*? It is simply Īśwara *śakthi* (power). This is what we refer to as *Ambāḻ*. It is *Māyā* that reflects the consciousness of the Self, which is full of life, intellect, and feelings just as a mirror reflects the sunshine. In the brightness of this small reflection, *Māyā* makes the *Jīvā's Anthahkaraña* receive life, emotions, and intellect. (*Anthahkaraña* consists of *chitthā*, which is the basis for all thoughts, the mind, which experiences the feelings, the intellect, which analyzes the nature of these, and the feeling of 'I', which is the basis for all these.) Alternatively, it is described in another way. If a pot exists in space, which pervades everywhere, the same space exists within the pot also. The all-pervading space is called *Mahā ākāśam* and the space within the pot is called *ghata ākāśam*. Similarly, *Māyā* confines the unbounded consciousness, which is like *Mahā ākāśam*, as a bounded individual (*Jīvā*) consciousness, like the pot. The power of *Māyā* that is able to do this should also be powerful enough to remove this distinction, right? It could move out of the way to stop the reflection and let the *Jīvā* shine as the light of *Āthmā* consciousness, right? The thing that was able to bind the unbounded into a pot could also destroy that form and make the *Jīvā* become one with the *Āthma ākāśā*, couldn't it?

You must think about another thing before asking how the mind would be connected to *Āthmā*, as is suggested by, 'Tame the mind and keep it under the control of *Āthmā*.' You should also think about how it is possible to implement the suggestions of 'tame the mind' and 'drag the mind.' All this advice is for the *Jīvā* who is still in the state of ignorance. Why would an enlightened man need advice? The mind is the reason for the very mode of the *Jīvā* in the ignorant state. The ignorant *Jīvā* doesn't have anything beyond the mind. In this case, what can the *Jīvā* use to carry out the instructions of 'drag the mind and tame it?' When all he has got is the mind, what else can he use to drag it in or tame it? It is the mind that is doing everything for him, and it is also the thing that makes him do things through its control over him. In this setup, what will do all these actions of dragging, taming, etc., and how will it do them? Would the mind do its own dragging and taming? Is it not its nature to run off untamed?

By Īśwarā's Grace

This is where the Almighty *Īśwarā's* grace comes in. He is the one who created the *Jīvā* and the world through His *Māyā*. The mind, being one of the creations of *Māyā*, can at best desire to be drawn and subside into something, but it can't actually do this to itself. When its innate nature is to keep moving, how can it subside itself? When Arjuna said, 'chanchalam hi mana: *Krishṅā*' *Bhagawān* agreed, saying, 'Of course, without a doubt, the mind is indeed motion-bound and unrestrainable.': *'aśamśayam mahā bāhō mano dhurnigraham chalam'*. Therefore, even though He adds that the mind can be tamed by *vairāgya* and *abhyāsa* in course of time, only if the mind allows it can the *Jīvā* perform this *abhyāsa*, right? Considering its vacillating tendency, would the mind let this happen? In a similar vein, would it allow him to practice *vairāgya* when it is full of desires? There is a single explanation for all of this - that is, *Īśwarā's* grace. *Īśwarā* takes pity on him, thinking, 'Oh, poor soul! This *Jīvā* has ventured into such a *sādhanā* using this vacillating mind!' He bestows His grace on the *Jīvā* so that he will be intensified in his *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* by letting his mind be controlled and drawn inward.

Unlike the *Jīvā*, *Īśwarā* is a power that is superior to the mind. So only with His grace can the mind be subdued. It doesn't subdue itself. It is only *Īśwarā* who grasps the *Jīvā*'s mind into His own *Āthma swarūpa*, which has no trace of *Māyā*. All a *Jīvā* can do is to make an effort and try. Beyond that, it is really up to the creator of the play of *Māyā* to grant the successful completion of it. Therefore, it is meaningless to argue using the mundane logic as to how the mind could dissolve itself into the *Āthmā*, who is actionless and beyond its own grasp. It is 'that', which has been turned into 'this' by *Māyā*, isn't it? So the same *Māyā* lets 'this' become 'that' again by moving itself out of the way.

The mind can't grasp *Āthmā*. But the only thing we know and the one thing that has a firm hold on us is indeed this mind. Therefore, we just have to carry out our efforts, trials, and *sādhanā* using only this mind. The only thing that is within the capability of the mind is simply to think of the desire to get rid of the troublesome self and become *Āthmā*, which is totally free of trouble. With *vairāgya*, the mind should keep repeating this thought, which is well within its ability. Then, of course, there is this thing called grace, which will take care of the rest. It will grant the Self-Realization, making the mind cease. This is what *Bhagawān* says,

> *'thath prasādhāth param sānthim*
> *sthānam prāpsyasi sāśvatham'* (*Gītā* 18-62)

'By the grace of *Īśwarā*, you will reach the higher, everlasting, peaceful state.'

Beyond Logic

How are we to determine what is and is not possible for *Māyā*, and what is and is not possible to be brought on by grace? When our own logic is a creation of that very same *Māyā*, things don't necessarily have to happen in a way that makes sense to this logic. It is clearly obvious that the very same action-less, peaceful *Āthmā* has become our constantly action-bound, obtuse selves. What is the use of arguing that this is illogical? It is so patently obvious! So we must accept that the converse is also possible; *Īśwara śakthi*, the underlying cause, can similarly transform us, the simpletons, back into the smart *Āthmā*.

Obvious Evidences

Intellect and books cannot provide proof for the process of cessation of the mind and the materialization of Self-Realization. The only proof is through the *Mahāns* who were living examples of immersion in the *Āthmānandha* after their minds ceased to exist.

Sadhāśiva Brahmēndhrāḷ is one such example. He was oblivious even when his arm was sliced open. In Kodumudi, he was sitting on the banks of *Kavēri* in *yōgā* nishtā. The currents of the floods swept him away and buried him in a pile of sand. Several days later, when some one dug into the pile, they injured his hand and blood gushed out. They cried out, 'Oh, no! Somebody seems to be inside!' and pulled him out. Apparently, he simply got up, smiled blissfully as always, and wandered off wherever his legs would take him.

You might say, 'That story is three hundred years old. It could have just been made up. How can we believe it?' Such *Mahāns* have existed even in the recent past. Our own family elders have seen them.

Those who have seen *Mouña Swāmigaḻ* (Silent saint) of *Kumbakōñam* in person recount in astonishment. Apparently, he would be absorbed in nishtā, unaware of the passage of time. If he went into *samādhi* with his eyes open, then for the entire duration of his *samādhi*, be it several hours or even several days, his eyes would never blink and remain in a constant, open stare. The lids wouldn't close even if you stuck a finger on the iris. The *bhakthās* would try to stuff some food in his mouth. If it didn't slip in by itself, it would just be smeared on his mouth. Ants would get all over it and sting, and his lips would all be swollen and drooping. Oblivious to all this, he would still be in his nishtā. His face would radiate the glow of Āthmic brilliance.

Though the mind is absent in deep sleep too, since the knowledge of *Āthmā* is not there, not only do we not have the radiance, but we don't even have the normal brightness and lie like 'you-know-what'! The *Mahāns* in *samādhi*, however, display a bright, gentle smile as a reflection of the *Āthmānandha*.

If *Mouña Swāmigaḻ* stayed in nishtā undisturbed for two or three days in spite of the sticky food all over, the others would remove it, clean his mouth and try placing some more food.

People give similar accounts of other great yogis. It seems even if you pressed some sugar on their tongues, not a drop of saliva would secrete, and it would stay undissolved regardless of the length of time. This is all evidence to show that it is indeed possible for the *Jīvā* to be absorbed in the enjoyment of the supreme bliss. At this stage, the *Mahāns* are numb to all our worldly desires and pleasures, and they are not subjected to the pull of the taste for things of comfort and pleasure.

Similarly, several people give eyewitness accounts of Bhaskar*ānandhā* of *Kāśi*, whom they have seen on day-to-day encounters.

We know about *Swāmi Ramaṅā* ourselves. Oblivious to the worms and insects that bore into his thighs and back, he sits absorbed in the bliss of *Āthmā*.

The greatest demonstration of such people's experience is the unique special influence of their presence. Several people from all corners of the country, and even from other countries, come to *Ramaṅāśramam*. They say, 'We went in there with so many struggles and mental tribulations. Simply sitting in front of him, all those troubles disappeared without a trace and all was so peaceful.' Among them, several people have become great *sadhākās* later. Even those who returned to mundane life without having such a transformation say that while in the *āśramā*, they experienced a unique peace at least for a little while, and their mind wasn't attached to *samsārā*. For that matter, he doesn't even give lectures like I do; he responds only when inquired. Nonetheless, people claim that even his silent presence gives some kind of peace. Do you feel the same effect when looking at a sleeping man? You actually feel a little dull, don't you?

This very phenomenon of the flow of such a power of grace that is full of life emanating from the *jnānis* to others proves that these people are not in a peaceful void. Instead, they are in a totally blissful peace. It also proves that this power of grace makes it possible for others to avail such a high state as well, albeit temporarily. Expanding this further, we are able to accept that it is possible to experience *Āthmā* by the grace of *Īśwarā* when the mind ceases forever.

We read that Suka Brahmam in those days and *Sadhāsiva Brahmēndhrāḻ* in recent times roamed the forests, hills, and rivers in absolute bliss, completely unclothed, just like a baby.

Even in the totally action-less, sculpture-like state of *nirvikalpa samādhi* nishtā, the Self-Realized souls are full of bliss inside. This is quite obvious from their outward appearance.

Jīvan Mukthās

Even after coming out of the nishtā, the *Mahāns*' internal experience doesn't change. The very concept of the nishtā getting dispersed is only from our view. Even though we are under the impression that they are experiencing outward consciousness after the nishtā, they are still one with *Āthmā*. They are called *Jīvan mukthās* - the ones who have absolutely no bond with the mind, *samsārā*, or *karmā* and have attained *mōkshā* right here, on Earth. A baby keeps drinking the mother's milk even while asleep, doesn't it? In exactly the same way, they remain in the *samādhi* nishtā inside while outwardly appearing to move around and engage in conversations in the external world. During this outward drama, even if they seemed to be showing emotions such as anger, grief, etc., in reality they are one with the eternal bliss of *Āthmā*.

Sometimes these very same Self-Realized souls refer to this internal experience as a void or ruin from our point of view. But in reality, it is simply a state filled with *ānandhā*.

Ānandhā Comes Only from Āthmā

I get a chuckle trying to give proof to establish *Āthmānubhāvā* as full of *ānandhā* as opposed to a state of void with nothing in it. What we call *ānandhā* is actually the defining characteristic of the form of *Āthmā*. Recall the example that I gave using a pot with tiny holes and a lamp inside. This is similar to being questioned by the things that get their tiny bit of brightness from the impact of the rays that escaped through the tiny holes of the pot containing the source of all brightness. What would it be like if they asked, 'Does the lamp in this pot have any brightness or not?' It is exactly the same way when we who find just a little bit of pleasure every once in a while through our senses ask whether *Āthmā* has *ānandhā* in its solitary state.

Dogs have a habit. When a dog sees a dried up piece of bone, it will start chewing it for the remaining flavor of the meat that used to stick to it a long time back. No real nourishment will come out of that bone for it to eat. But it will lacerate the dog's mouth and the dog's own blood will start to ooze out. Without realizing this, the dog will happily think that the blood is coming from the bone. So biting it harder and harder, it will get its gash to bleed more and more. Drinking the blood coming from its own gash, it will be very pleased. Similarly, the pleasure that we feel from external objects is not really provided by these objects. Just like the blood from the dog's mouth, this pleasure is inherent in the *indhriyās* themselves. Where did that blood come from? It originated from the dog's life. Similarly, the pleasure of the *indhriya* also comes only from *Āthmā*. Instead of remaining only as *Āthmā* and getting fulfillment from that total bliss, we perceive as pleasure the tiny portion of this bliss that is reflected by the *indhriyās*. Not only that, we also think that this little pleasure comes from the objects that the *indhriyās* indulge in! *Ānandhā* is simply subjective, our own; it is not an objective thing coming from an external object. Even our own selves are in fact *Āthmā*, not the *indhriyās* or *Anthahkarańa*.

Possessor, Not Possessed

We can infer this from our common colloquial practice. When we say 'my' for something, then that something is not really 'I'. When I say, 'This is my *dhandam* (staff)' or 'This is my *kāmandalam*', it is quite clear that I am not the *dhandam* or the *kāmandalam*. It implies that there is another person who has these as his possessions. The possessive pronoun as a subject is different from the possessed object. You say 'my house', 'my son', and 'my bank deposit'. So obviously, these things are not 'you'. These are your possessions or the possessed; you are the possessor.

Now let me show you how the body (or the *indhriyās*) is not the 'I', nor is the *Anthahkarańa* (the internal organs), which is the collection of the mind, intellect, consciousness, and ego. On many occasions, don't you say 'my hand', 'my leg', and 'my body'? You say, 'my eyesight is getting reduced', 'my ears are functioning much better after the operation', etc. You refer to the *indhriyās* in possessive form, don't you? We also talk about the *Anthahkarańa* using the possessive form, saying, 'you don't know my mind', 'my brain should be slapped with a pair of shoes', etc. So, there should be a possessor, who possesses all these possessed, right? That possessor is the 'I'. Can we ever say 'my 'I''? Never! The one that is never possessed but always remains as the possessor is *Āthmā*.

If we ever say 'my *Āthmā*' in casual talk, it is wrong. Similarly, referring to it as some one else's *Āthmā* is also wrong. It is just a mistake we commit because of our ignorance about *Āthmā*. When do we normally talk about *Āthmā*? When some one suffers a lot, we say, 'Poor thing! That *Āthmā* is going through so much torment.' We refer to some one who is constantly agitated as 'restless *Āthmā*'. In the obituary column of a newspaper, they say, 'May so-and-so's *Āthmā* rest in peace'. In all these situations, the usage of '*Āthmā*' is not correct. *Āthmā* doesn't go through torment, it can't ever be restless, and it doesn't have to find some new peace. In all these contexts, we incorrectly refer to something else as *Āthmā*. That something else is simply the individual *Jīvā* identified as such under the influence of *Māyā*, which is nothing but a little spark of the great brilliance of *Āthmā* Consciousness. This *Jīvā* then performs actions through the *Anthahkarańa*. The little spark is mistakenly referred as *Āthmā*. This is really the ego. A *Jīvā* who is controlled by his consciousness, intellect, mind, organs of actions, and organs of knowledge identifies these controlling elements as 'I'. This is called *ahankāra* (the sense of 'I'). *Anthahkaraña* includes this *ahankāra* along with the consciousness, intellect, and the mind. *Āthmā* is an unpartitioned whole. Its splintered part, gaining its own life identity and recognizing it as 'I', is *ahankāra* or ego. Most of the time, we erroneously refer to this ego as *Āthmā*. To refer to the individual *Jīvā ahankāra* as *Āthmā* is akin to dipping a jug in the ocean and calling the quart of water in it the ocean. Just as the water in the jug is of course that of the ocean, this *ahankāra* is also that of *Āthmā*. This cannot be 'I' either, but only 'my'. This did originate from the brilliance of *Āthmā*, didn't it?

However, *Āthmā* never thinks of anything as 'mine'. It knows only 'I'. It doesn't know anything external to itself that it can think of as 'my'. Even though everything that is associated with *Jīvā* came from it, it never associates itself with any of that.

Desire's Target is Really the Āthmā

All the pleasures that we feel are those of the little *Jīvā's ahankāra*, or ego. This *ahankāra* attains *ānandhā* only from the fulfillment of desires. *Āthmā*, by contrast, is desire-less. Desire can only spring towards something that is external to itself. But *Āthmā* doesn't know any external objects. Just as the consciousness of the small *Jīvā* 'I' came from the *Āthmā* Consciousness, this desire also comes from its desire towards *Āthmā*. This might sound odd. *Āthmā* is simply a stand-alone entity. That is, it is an *adhvaithic* object. You might wonder how this could be a target of desire, which pertains only to the concept of Dhvaitha. You might ask how the *Jīvā's* mind, which has no knowledge of *Āthmā*, could have a desire towards it.

Nevertheless, the Upanishads explain it just like this. When *Yajñavālkya Mahārishi* gives *upadēsā* (words of wisdom) to his wife *Maithrēyi*, he discusses this aspect. He uses the word 'love' instead of 'desire'. Both are very closely related terms; we might even say they are one and the same. We love the objects of our desire. We do not desire objects that we do not love. *Yajñavālkyā* says, 'When you say a wife loves her husband, it doesn't mean that she loves him for his own sake. She loves him for the sake of *Āthmā* (her Self). So is his love for her. The love of attachment to the children is not for the sake of those children; only for the sake of *Āthmā*. It is for the same reason that materials are lovable.' He goes on explaining in this manner. You might recall an example that I gave earlier about a gentleman who spent all his wealth for the sake of his son. Then he gave up his son for the sake of his second wife. Then, when he was ill, he nourished only himself, leaving her out. Then, even in his own body, he gave up his *karmēndhrīyās* for the sake of *jnānēndhrīyās* (allowing them to be amputated), and so on. Furthermore, for the sake of his mind's pleasure, he gave up all the *indhriyās* and got drunk and disorderly. For the sake of the pleasure of his life, which he himself didn't clearly understand, he left instructions to keep himself in a coma without the activities of the mind, that is, giving up his mind. (He didn't know if life felt pleasure or not. He didn't even have a clue as to what it was. However, he thought he should keep it.) I was narrating these things one after another in a long sequence as wagons are linked to a freight train. If you delve deep into these, you will understand that the target of all these desires is the life whose root is *Āthmā*. We also infer that we, the *jīvās*, love or desire this.

If the desire for money were only for the sake of money, he wouldn't have felt like spending it for his son. Again, if the desire for his son were only for the sake of his son, he wouldn't have given him up for the sake of his wife. Similarly, we see that his desire for his wife was also not for her sake. Each desire was of increasing magnitude. First came money, then son, wife, *karmēndhrīya*, *jnānēndhrīya*, and so on, and then it ended with the root of life, the true 'I'. We see that it is the final destination. Though it is in fact the end, all desires were only towards it even from the beginning. The desires for money, son, wife, body, etc. were for the satisfaction of his own mind, the little 'I'. Since the mind doesn't desire all of this at the same level, and one level was more satisfying than the other, each desire was given up in the process. More than the body, the mind desired itself, so it was ready to give up the body. But in the end, when the mind removed itself to let the life stay, even though it didn't quite understand it clearly, we see that it did that only because of its love for *Āthmā*.

If we change this clueless love into a love with proper understanding, we can get the desire right now to merge the mind into *Āthmā* and remain only as *Āthmā*. We might want to try to implement what *Bhagawān* advised when he said, *'thathasthathō niyamyaithadh Āthmanyēva vasam nayēth'*.

Annihilation of Asūra Army is Victory for Attaining Āthmā

I mentioned that the *Āthmā* that *Bhagawān* was talking about is the one that simply exists. Then I said that 'simply exists' doesn't mean 'simply as a void', but as a conscious and blissful entity. 'To be' or 'to exist' is called *sath*; to be not as an inanimate object but as a consciousness with life, intellect, and feeling is called *chith*; this feeling which dwells on itself and experiences its own innate nature rather than something external is called *ānandhā*. This is why *Āthmā* is called *sath-chith-ānandhā*. Since this doesn't know anything external and isn't pleased by anything external, but always remains with self-knowledge (*swabōdha*) and self-experience (*swānubhūthi*), I happened to say 'simply exists'.

It is the 'simple existence' with no external entity, the 'simple' of a solitary state.

Only by reaching that state, with the extinction of the mind and the body (extinction of the association of the body with 'I'), can we win *Āthmā* after the annihilation of the *asūra* army of *kāma* and *krōdha*.

We can make only this particular body cease through death; we cannot achieve the cessation of bodies altogether. Even after death, another body in the next birth, *yādhanā* body in *naraka*, ghost body after suicide, and so on will of course be created. So the solution is simply the understanding that 'this body is not 'I'', not death.

Root Cause of Trouble

At one point in the *Gītā*, *Bhagawān* simply says that Kāma-*krōdha* is the root of all troubles. However, in another place, He says, 'Even this Kāma-*krōdha* is only an effect. There is another root cause for this, and that is the mind. The goal should be to do away with the mind and win *Āthmā*.'

To the extent of our understanding, desire is the root cause of all untowardness. At the stage we are in, all we can do is tame this desire. Whenever we encounter a hardship, the only direct cause that we can point to is desire. This is what we mean when we make statements like, 'You craved for it, didn't you? Well, pay for it now and suffer.' Since desire is the proximate cause that we can actually put our finger on, He cites this as the reason.

But this is not the root cause. It was not totally correct to have identified desire as the termite that keeps building the nest over and over again; it was not totally incorrect either. The cause for desire is the mind. The mind's own cause, *Māyā*, is the root cause for the entire *dhvaithic* universe. This is the queen or mother termite - the same *Mahā Māyā* is also referred to as the Mother! Let's not get into that now. Since *Māyā* creates the *Jīvā's* state of bondage only through the mind, it is the cessation of the mind that the *Jīvā* should strive for.

The direct cause of desire is the *rajōguña* in particular, one of the *guñās* (characteristics) that arise in the mind. *'Rajōguña samudhbhāvā:'* says *Bhagawān*. Since He says, 'Desire is born from the *rajō guña*', we learn that *rajō guña* is the direct cause of desire.

Among the three *guñās* called *sathva*, Rajas, and thamas, *sathva* stands for the state of mind that is in balance and with clarity. Thamas stands for the state of mind that is dull, without getting involved in anything, lazy, and idle. Rajas is the state in which the mind is constantly active and has the urge to keep doing something. It is in this rajasic state of mind that desire springs up. This explanation seems to indicate that *rajō guña* (any *guña* for that matter) exists only with the association of the mind. Therefore we conclude that even this *rajō guña* is not the root cause of all the untowardness, only the mind. In the ultimate analysis, the three *guñās* , the mind, and so on, are only the work of *Māyā*. So we end up with the conclusion that *Māyā* is the root cause.

However, we can't do anything to *Māyā*, the super power. It is not within our capacity to tame it. The only thing that is within our ability is the taming of the mind. If rain is lashing out, is it possible for us to stop the rain? We can only shut the windows. The gust from the rain itself would impose difficulty in pulling the window-panes to shut. But if we try hard, we can close it.

Therefore, as far as we are concerned, the cause of all the untowardness is the mind. Desire comes up only from that. I have already mentioned that desire is nothing but the thirst and itch of the mind.

Though initially *Bhagawān* tells Arjuna that the proximate cause of all bad impulses is desire, He immediately takes it further and says that the mind is the supporting base for desire.

Even at the very outset of *Gītōpadēsam*, He gives a long list of the whole chain of untowardness from its first root to the end. He says, 'Because of his thinking, man gets connected to the objects of indulgence. Because of this connection, desire is born ('sankāth sanjāyathē Kāma:'). From desire, *krōdha* is born; from *krōdha*, comes *mōha*. Then comes the confusion of intellect from *mōha*. The confusion results in the destruction of intellect, and then the whole person gets destroyed and ruined.' Kāma is not the first reason. Since thinking connects the mind to objects, Kāma arises. The place where thinking occurs is the mind; all thoughts arise only from the mind.

Since *Māyā* creates the individual identity for *Jīvā* only through the mind, the elders combine both and talk about 'Mana Māyā' (mind's illusion). That is the root cause. Only when that ceases can we get out of the pull of *Kāma-krōdha* and other vices and attain peace and everlasting bliss.

In the same place where I started first (the part of the third chapter in *Gītā* that relates to Kāma and *krōdha*), in continuation of His declaration that *kāma-krōdha* is what pushes a *Jīvā* into *pāpa*, He talks about the places where this fire of desire roots itself (*Adhishtānā*). They are the *indhriyās*, mind, and intellect. During the course of this, He clarifies that the individual identity of the *Jīvā* that *Māyā* creates in *Āthmā* using these three places of Adhishtānam is indeed the root cause for all this untowardness. In general, all these three are collectively referred to as 'Mana Māyā'. It is only the mind that runs off unrestrained through the *indhriyās*. The reason for all the frenzy of the *indhriyās* and their hunger of desire is again the mind. It is the intellect that controls the mind from such a runoff. So we can classify the untamed mind as the *indhriyās* and the part of the mind that does the taming as the intellect.

Indhriya is Also Highly Regarded

He continues to talk about these three, saying one is superior to the others:

> *'indhriyān̄i parān̄yāhu: indhriyēbhya: param mana:*
> *manasāsthu parā buddhi: yō buddhē: parathasthu sa:*
>
> (*Gītā* 3-42)

He starts with the statement that *indhriyās* are highly placed. 'Parān̄i' means 'with greatness'. Is He calling the *indhriyās* that pull us deep down into a pit great? Yes, indeed. That is exactly what He is saying. Not only did He say that, He also adds that the elders say this. 'āhu:' means 'they say'. 'indhriyān̄i parān̄i āhu:' - 'they say that the *indhriyās* have greatness'. Who say this? - The knowledgeable elders say this. *Bhagawān* doesn't explicitly state 'knowledgeable elders'. But if He accepts a certain view and quotes it, the people who had proclaimed that view must have been knowledgeable elders.

Why is He saying that the *indhriyās* that pull us down are great? Because that is the usual approach of Krishn̄a *Paramāthmā*. Everything is a mixture of good and bad. Even poison is sometimes used as medicine. It is His habit to mention such good in anything to support it where such a support is appropriate and to the extent that it should be supported. Say there is something that is very prone to creating bad effects, but it has a tiny bit of good in it too. Even when it is such that it is best for some one to give the thing up altogether, *Bhagawān* will see whether this person is capable of giving it up completely in the immature state that he is in. The elders that He refers to as 'āhu:', the people who know the *Dharma śāsthrās*, will also look for that. Since this person doesn't have the firmness that is necessary to give it up completely, they will devise a way to make it convenient for him to give it up gradually. They will show the good in it and channel him into good activities that could utilize this good aspect - that is, instead of giving it up altogether, they will make him give up only things that give room for bad results. Progressing like this will prepare him to give it all up eventually.

It is of course wrong to pray to *Bhagawān* for money. Even praying for the removal of difficulties or the cure of a disease denotes poor intellect. It is true *bhakthi* only when it is done for the sake of *Bhagawān*. However, He refers (*Gītā* 7-18) to even these people who pray for money and the removal of difficulties as great ('udhārā:'). Why does He say that? Because, even in the prayer for money and the removal of difficulties, several good aspects are present. Whatever the reasons might be, he is actually thinking of *Bhagawān* in the process. It comes with the conviction that He is a great power who can do something that the one who is praying can't do. (This also comes with the belief that He has the graceful mind to fulfill his prayer) This is why He referred to even people who make such prayers as great. He said that thinking, 'As long as he comes to Me in some way, that is enough. It is possible to grant him the maturity to follow the proper way little by little.'

It is not even necessary to think of Him with love. He granted high status even to people who thought of Him with fear,like Kamsa, and with anger, like *Sisupālā*. He saw the good in everything. Even in things that have mostly bad aspects, if there were even a drop of good, He would keep on encouraging the good and then make the *Jīvā* give up both the good and the bad. This is the path of our *vedhic* dharma.

I mentioned discarding both the good and the bad. You might wonder why the good should be discarded. Let me address that later. The entire principle of Adhvaitha lies in such a rejection of both.

Well, money can be used for philanthropic purposes too, right? Only when some one is free from his afflictions such as disease can he meditate on *Bhagawān* with no other bothers and also perform public service, right? Therefore, He will also add the people who pray for these to the list of udhārā (great). Ultimately, none of these things such as charity, disease, or difficulty should matter. He has to discard them as related to the *Māyā* universe. But preaching this to some one won't work in the beginning stages. He might misinterpret the 'no need for charity' message and become one with a cruel mind with no grace or empathy. He must first achieve the *vairāgya* to consider the advice that 'disease is not mine'. Otherwise, in his immature stage, if he ignores the disease and fails to cure it, he might actually suffer twice as much. He might adopt the attitude of, 'let the difficulty come, I'll not pray to get relief' even before he develops the ability to view both difficulty and comfort with equanimity. Then he might actually let it grow into a huge problem, and not knowing how to be detached from it, he might go through immense suffering.

The elders who have given us the *sāsthrās* and *Bhagawān* who has given us the essence of these *sāsthrās* in the *Gītā* have devised ways to let the *Jīvā* get involved only to the extent of the goodness present in endeavors that he would find attractive. In doing that, they have taken several reasons into consideration, specifically keeping in mind the mental state of the common man.

Bhagawān's reference to *indhriyās* as 'parāṇi' - 'great' - is in a similar vein. We are indeed able to receive so many beautiful, divine, and purely joyful experiences through the *indhriyās*. If a ghee lamp is lit in *Ambāḷ sannidhi* (sanctum sanctorum), the nose sends the divine presence into us using the sense of smell, doesn't it? When she is decorated, it is a feast for our eyes and we have a holy view of it; we drink that divine nectar through the eyes, don't we? When some one gives a heartrending performance of the compositions of Th*yāgā*raja *Swāmigal* or Thayumanavar, thoughts of *Īswarā* flow into us through our ears, don't they? So even though the *indhriyās* have a tendency to go after bad things, and they have to be discarded in the end, in the beginning stages, when we are unable to discard them, we should develop a habit of doing the good that these *indhriyās* are capable of doing. We should engage the arms, legs, eyes, nose, tongue, and so on in performing *pūjā*, pilgrimage, visiting temples, singing divine names, building temples, digging for a pond, or any other social service. Since the *indhriyās* are capable of doing these good deeds as well, they are indeed great and should be highly regarded.

If you consider each *indhriya* and think of it as a machine made by *Parāśakthi* - not an inanimate machine, but a machine with life - it will definitely appear very great. This tiny eye is able to see an enormous mountain range and understands all kinds of differences in colors. Similarly, the ear is able to distinguish thousands of sound variations as being some animal's or bird's call, a particular musical instrument's music, etc. The tongue is also able to recognize thousands of taste distinctions. Again, the nose sets apart the smells of each and every different thing. The sense of touch is even more astonishing. In a well, which is over seventy to eighty feet deep with ten to twenty feet of water, some object may be lying on the bottom. We can't see it, and we definitely can't touch it with our hands. Even then, from far up at the top, it is enough to stick a long pole inside and let it touch the object. We are then able to figure out its rough shape, whether it is hard or soft, etc. So calling the *indhriyās*, which have this much ability, great is not wrong.

The ultimate wonder is that all this recognition of colors, sounds, smells, etc. are not achieved by these eyes, ears, and nose. It is only the brain that does that. It is only through the intricate connections given by the brain that the current of chaithanya flows and provides these powers to the *indhriyās*. The supporting base for all of this is the mind. Therefore, after calling the *indhriyās* great, He says that the mind is greater than that - *'indhriēbhya param mana:'*. Since *indhriyās* are simply the instruments of the mind, it is higher than they are.

Then buddhi (intellect) is even higher than the mind. *'manasāsthu parā buddhi:'* The feelings simply start up in the mind as they please. The mind doesn't check whether they are good or bad. Both the good and the bad spring up in the mind with equal footing. Intellect is the one that analyzes these feelings to see which is good and which is bad and then discards the bad and selects the good. When the mind is unsure of its several thoughts, the thing that determines which one will be selected and affirmed is the intellect. The mind's job is simply to seek out whatever appeals to it. We can't say for sure that whatever appeals will also be good. Determining which one is good and making the mind go in that direction is the intellect's job. The mind would think, 'this is good' one minute. Next minute, it would move on to something else, no longer thinking that the first one is good. It would be constantly doubting and wavering. The intellect is not like this. It would make a firm determination as to 'this is good and this is bad.'

The mind and the intellect, which are given several meanings in several places depending on the context, should be interpreted here only in the way they were described above. When categorizing *Anthahkaraṅa* as consisting of four things called mind, intellect, *chitthā*, and *ahankāra*, *Āchāryā* only gives this explanation. But in general, the mind is only used to mean *Anthahkaraṅa*. I also mostly follow the same convention. That is, the mind itself has higher and lower parts. Within this, we might say that the lower mind is the one that is unsure about the good and bad and simply runs after whatever is pleasing to its feeling; the higher mind is the intellect that makes judgements on which is good.

In common practice, we don't necessarily consider intellect as the thing that chooses the good from the bad. Even the clever planning involved in an evil act is thought of as the work of the intellect. Whether good or bad, unlike the mind, which runs off in all directions only following its flow of feeling, the intellect is perceived as something that proceeds with a definite opinion to devise a plan and present it. So whichever way you look at it, the mind is unsure and the intellect is sure.

Ultimately, there is no real good or bad. Both are *Māyā*. What is *Āthmā* like in its true state, without the connection to *Anthahkaraṅa*, the mind's wavering, and the intellect's action of removing this wavering and firming it up? In other words, what is a *jnāni's samādhi* state like? We don't know that. But we do know something very similar to it, which is the state of sleep - I mean the deep sleep, which doesn't have dreaming, or the flow of action within the *Anthahkaraṅa*. Neither anything good nor anything bad occurs in that state of deep sleep. So neither the good nor the bad has any connection to *Āthmā*. They are just creations of *Anthahkaraṅa* due to *Māyā*. So even the intellect that performs the great job of determining good and bad is not the highest state.

We just saw earlier that the intellect is one of the places of *Adhishtānā* for Kāma according to *Bhagawān* Himself. How can it be the highest state when it is an *Adhishtānā* of Kāma? Even the intellect that differentiates the good from the bad will stop with the good. Or shall we say that it has a desire for good things? So it will not be useful in going above itself and identifying *Āthmā*. The intellect is the thing that firmly determines that *Māyā*'s creation of the *Jīvā* from the stand-alone *Āthmā* is something that is good. So when we have to go above *Māyā* to become one with *Āthmā*, it implies that the intellect should also be given up. So that keeps the intellect from being the ultimate state.

Āthmā is Always the Truth

Āthmā, which is the underlying support for the intellect, is at the top - the highest of the high. It is the '*thath*' in '*thath-sath*'.

What is '*sath*'? It is the one thing that never changes and always remains as such.

Truth is such that it never changes. That truth, or *sathyam*, (it is actually enough to say just sath) is none other than *Āthmā*.

'*Thath*' means 'that'. Instead of being a He or a She, the thing that is 'That' is *Āthmā*.

When we refer to the same 'That' as *Īśwarā*, we say 'He', using the masculine gender. Some ardent devotees of *Ambāḻ* might say, 'Whatever Her will, it will be so'. But in general, 'He' is the commonly used term. The common saying goes, 'But for Him, not even an atom would move.' Even *Nammāzhvār* starts *Thiruvāymozhi* with a reference to God in masculine. Even in English, God is referred to as He, a male, with a distinctive capital 'H'. In Sanskrit, 'sa:' means 'He'. *Paramāthmā* is referred to only as 'sa:'. There is an Adhvaitha *upāsanā* (worship) that says '*sōham*' to mean that *Paramāthmā* and *Jīvāthmā* are one and the same. '*Sōham*' is a compound word that splits into 'sa: aham'. 'Aham' means 'I' - the *Upāsakā* (worshipper) or the *Jīvāthmā*. Here, the one who is referred to as 'sa:' in the masculine gender is *Paramāthmā*. I just wanted to show you that this *sathya* object that is referred to as 'That' in neuter gender is sometimes referred to as 'sa:' in masculine gender as well. When we say '*Purushā* Sūktham', the male '*Purushā*' in that expression is in fact this *Paramāthmā* entity. In the *Sānkya Śāsthrā*, *Āthmā* itself is referred to as '*Purushā*'. They refer to *Māyā* as '*Prakruthi*' in that system. The thing that is aloof from everything is *Āthmā*, or *Purushā*. The *sakthi*, which is *Māyā* or *Parāsakthi*, who brings in from this very *Āthmā* the entire *jagath* (universe), *Jīvā*, and all the paraphernalia of the *Jīvā* starting with his *indhriyās*, is of feminine gender. This *Purushā-Prakruthi* pair is also referred to as *Śivam* and *Śakthi* as a male/female pair.

Krishńa *Paramāthmā* refers to this *Āthmā* that is above the intellect as 'sa:' or 'He'. He says, *'buddhē: parathasthu sa:'* - meaning, *Āthmā* is higher than even the intellect.

Step by Step to the State of Āthmā

Everything besides *Āthmā* is *Māyā* - that is, illusion or falsehood. However, we are not able to think like that. This is because of the tiny reflection of the *Āthma chaithanya* in all this falsehood that I had talked about earlier. Because of the shadow cast by this true *Āthmā* in the falsehood of the *indhriya*, the falsehood of the mind, and the falsehood of the intellect, we see the truth. The power of *Māyā* makes it so. That is why the Adhvaitha *śāsthrā* refers to this as '*prāthibhāsika sathyam*', that is, containing a little bit of truth in the form of reflection, instead of '*adhyantha asath*' or absolute falsehood.

Because of this current of the *Māyā śakthi*, we find that right now it is impossible to raise ourselves to the level where both the good and the bad are absent. Therefore, even though *Āthmā* is beyond good and bad, we have to progress towards it slowly, only through the good aspects. If you wonder why, the elders give an example to elucidate this. Just as we use a thorn to pluck out another thorn and then discard both of them, we should dig out the bad by means of the good , discard both of them, and become one with the *Āthma swarūpa*. We are well aware that we are caught up in so many vices. We see that we are entangled in so many things such as desire, anger, sorrow, fear, etc. It is of no use to ask, 'How did *Āthmā*, which is not connected to anything, get caught like this? Or be under the illusion of being caught, that is, caught in *Māyā*?' This is discussed in the Adhvaitha *śāsthrā* in various ways, and it finally concludes with a statement that nothing can be said about the nature of *Māyā* - it is '*anirvachanīyam*'. There is no use in researching how we got caught like this. We just need to search for a way to get out. If a snake were coiled up on our leg, would we be trying hard to figure out how it got coiled up like that? We would be concentrating on how to shake it off and get out, wouldn't we? The same way, we who are suffering, caught in *Māyā*, must search for a way out. The elders, who have freed themselves by searching for and finding such a way, have also shown it to us. They have said, 'From the falsehoods of the *indhriya*, mind, and intellect, which do have a tiny portion of the truth mixed in, you must go to the Absolute Truth, which has absolutely no falsehood mixed in. Even among these, one is higher than the other, or one has more of the reflection of *Āthmā*'s brilliance than the other. Put another way, the proportion of truth keeps increasing from one to the other. Therefore, climb up to the experiences of the mind little by little from the experiences of the *indhriyās*; then climb up to the experience of the intellect; eventually, you will reach *Āthmā*.' They add that none of them are really *Āthmā*, but they will lead you to *Āthmā*.

Here in Thirupathi, we have climbed the seven hills one at a time and come to *Perumāḻ*. Similarly, we have to cross over the *indhriyās*, mind, and intellect, and then we can reach *Āthmā*. Are the hills themselves *Perumāḻ*? Of course not. Is the last step of the seventh hill *Perumāḻ*? No, even that is not *Perumāḻ*. Only if we cross that too, is *Perumāḻ* seen as 'above and beyond'. The same way, the *indhriyās*, the mind, and the intellect are not *Āthmā*. Even the height of intellect is not *Āthmā*. However, only if you climb all the way up to that level can you get the divine view of *Āthmā*. If we insist that we want Self-Realization right now, right in the state where we are, it is akin to saying that we want the *dharśan* of *Perumāḻ* right from Lower Thirupathi. Just as we climb each hill, we have to perform *karmā*, *upāsanā* (worship), *dhyāna* (meditation), and *vichārā* (inquiry) by using the *indhriyās*, the mind, and the intellect. Only then will we end up attaining Self-Realization where all of this will become false. When we finally finish climbing up all the steps, right from the knee-breaking part of the hill, we don't do anything at all. We simply stop. Standing there, *Perumāḻ* gives His *dharśan* by Himself. Similarly, the body, mind, and intellect that give us the form of life simply lose their actions and stay in *samādhi*, doing nothing in the end. *Āthmā* shines on its own.

When climbing the hills of Thirupathi, we must go in the designated path. Such a designated path leading to the *Āthma dharśan* is what we call 'good'. If we stray off course, we might end up getting caught in a thicket. The forest and thicket are also part of the Thirupathi hill.

(Actually, calling it 'Thirupathi hill' is not exactly correct. We must say 'Thirumalai'. 'Pathi' means 'place' or 'town'. You might have heard that *Kāvirippūmpattinam* has another name, *Champāpathi*. Thirupathi is *Perumāḻ*'s town. The hill (*Malai*) on which this town is located is Thirumalai.)

Even in Thirumalai, only if we go in the designated way can we reach *Perumāḻ*. If we stray, we will get caught in the forest. It is of no use saying that the forest is also part of Thirumalai. Just like the good, of course the bad came from *Āthmā* too - 'from' *Āthmā*, not 'is' *Āthmā*! Both are the same kind of *Māyā*. Even so, do we really go through the forest in Thirumalai? Abandoning the good path recommended by the *śāsthrās* for reaching *Āthmā* and going in the wrong path is akin to this. The same mind and *indhriyās* that aid the performance of good deeds are also the cause for the bad ones. Even then, those shouldn't be followed. Although both good and bad stem from the same Mana Māyā, we should follow only good and not bad, just as we shouldn't stray off the proper path and follow the wrong path on Thirumalai. There are so many designations such as *karmā*, devotional methods, *yōgās*, etc. for doing just that.

Even within this process, a few bad elements will come. While climbing the hill, monkeys may intervene, robbers might come, or our arms and legs might ache. Similarly, so many obstacles will come along during the *sādhanā*. In spite of them, we must win over all of them with a firm resolve and then go further up. Then, just as we get *Perumāḻ's dharśan* simply by standing in His presence, after the *sādhanā* stops and the good and the bad disappear, *Āthmā*, on its own, will reveal itself for us to experience it. We did climb all the seven hills and go through all sorts of difficulties. But did we create *Perumāḻ*, whose *dharśan* we were able to have in the end? Similarly, we wouldn't have created the *Āthmā* that we attain at the end of the *sādhanā*. We simply reach *Āthmā* that has always been there.

Well, what is the conclusion to all that has been said so far? The cause of all hardship is *kāma-krōdha* - or the Kāma, which is the cause of *krōdha*; therefore Kāma has to be subdued; still, this Kāma is not the root cause either. It is generated in the mind and gets fulfilled by the actions of the *indhriyās*. Therefore, the mind and the *indhriyās* have to be subdued. Since it is not possible to subdue them in one shot, first, between their good and bad, the bad should be subdued by the good. Bad is the opposite of good - like darkness and light. What should we do to 'subdue' darkness? Don't we have to bring in light? Similarly, to subdue the bad, we have to do good through the mind and the *indhriyās*. We should do this with the help of the intellect. When we advance well into this process, after attaining good maturity, by *Īswarā's* grace, the intellect will also subside within *Āthmā* and then we will become one with *Āthma swarūpa*, which is neutral and unrelated to both the good and the bad. *Bhagawān* concludes His answer to Arjuna's question just this way:

'ēvam buddhē: param buddhvā samsthabhyāthmānamāthmanā
jahi sathrum Mahābāho Kāmarūpam dhurāsadham' (3-43)

Taming the Āthmā by Āthmā

Bhagawān has used the words *'samsthabhyāthmānā* - to specify 'taming the mind using the intellect'. This term splits as 'samsthabhya *āthmānam āthmnā'*. Its literal meaning is 'taming the *Āthmā* well by *Āthmā*'. In 'samsthabhya', 'sthabhya' means 'to make something motionless'. That is why a pillar, which stands without any motion, is called 'sthambam'. 'Samsthabhya' means 'to make something stand very firmly so that it can't move.' This *Gītā* verse says that *Āthmā* should be subdued, or made to stand like this, within *Āthmā*. Well, *Āthmā* has no actions; it will not be subdued either. What is the need for subduing something that is totally freed?

Then, why is it said like this? As I have already explained, in our present stage, don't we think of the mind as our true form of *Āthmā*? Within this mind, I described the lower mind as the one that is always vacillating and running off unrestrained and the higher mind as the intellect that determines what is good with firm conviction. When *Bhagawān* says that *Āthmā* should be subdued and made to stand still by *Āthmā*, what He refers to as '*Āthmā* to be subdued' ('*Āthmānam*') is this lower mind. What He refers to as '*Āthmā* that subdues' ('*Āthmanā*') is the intellect, or the higher mind. In his *bhāshya*, *Āchārya* has referred to this subduing '*Āthmanā*' as '*samskrithēna manasā*'. It means 'by the purified mind'. This is the intellect. In the unpurified state, the mind also runs towards the bad. The bad things are the impurities. Good things are pure. So the mind has to be subdued and held up by the intellect, which understands the good.

But then, the intellect should also be subdued! Wouldn't that have to disappear too for *Āthmā* to shine? Would the intellect tame itself? No. I just have to repeat what I had said a little earlier - 'How can the mind tame itself? All it can do is to anxiously wish for it to subside. *Īśwarā* will take pity on its anxiety, and He will subdue and dissolve it in *Āthmā*.' When I talked about it earlier, I didn't say that *buddhi* (intellect) is above the mind and the mind should be tamed by *buddhi*. The reason is that in that context, I used 'mind' to really mean the *Anthahkaraṇā*, which contains both the mind and *buddhi* as its parts.

Why No Mention of the Grace of Īśwarā?

In this context, *Bhagawān* doesn't say that *buddhi* subsides and the *sathya thatthva* (principle of truth) shines because of *Īśwara krupa* (grace). Though in other contexts He mentions that by surrendering to *Īśwarā* one can attain one's goal by His grace, He doesn't say it in this context. Perhaps, that is because He is talking only about the path of *jnānā* without bringing in the *Saguṇa* (with form and attributes) *Īśwarā*.

He might have been reasoning as follows: 'What difference does it make, whether I mention *Īśwara krupa* or not? His *krupa* is going to do whatever it needs to do anyway. Besides, what part does the *Jīvā* play in the grace bestowed by *Īśwarā*? All that he needs to do and can do is simply to attempt to tame the *Anthahkaraṇa* and long for it. That's all. He doesn't even need to call out for *Īśwarā*. Even if he doesn't explicitly mention the name '*Īśwarā*' and call Him, *Īśwarā* is residing inside him anyway, isn't He? Therefore, He would be pleased with his *sādhanā* and his craving for knowing the truth, and He would bestow whatever grace the *sādhakā* needed on His own. It is of course true that the *sādhakā* can receive *Īśwara krupa* by surrendering to Him, saying, 'You are my only refuge.' But that is not necessarily the only way. One can also keep doing self-inquiry in order to wear out his own desires, wishes, and even his mind through the path of *jnānā*. This will also serve to get rid of his *ahankāra*, won't it? Isn't the aspect of *saranāgathi* (absolute surrender) in the path of bhakthi the same state as well, where one is rid of his *ahankāra*? However, even after this *saranāgathi* in this path of Dhvaitha, he still retains a tiny bit of the individuality that is necessary for performing its characteristic bhakthi-prapatthi (serving *Īswarā* as a bhaktha). So for the total destruction of the *ahankāra*, the path of Adhvaitha (or *jnānā*) is more apt since it makes the *Jīvā* lose his individuality called 'aham' completely. Wouldn't *Īswarā* bestow His grace on some one who is very eagerly making an attempt for such a result?

'*Paramāthmā* doesn't give importance to just words and deeds. He notices the underlying intent of the heart. So even if the *sādhakā* doesn't specifically call out to *Īswarā* and declare, 'I am doing the *saranāgathi*', He showers His grace anyway, because of the *Jīvā*'s sincere, heartfelt attempts.' Reasoning in this manner, *Bhagawān* might have left out mentioning *Īswara krupa* while expounding on the path of *jnānā*.

A *Jīvā* cannot climb up on his own over and above the top-most level of the individualistic form, where he considers himself separate from *Āthmā*. The reason is that this very mode of separateness gives rise to the *Anthahkaranā*, which thinks of an individual 'I'. The mind and buddhi are this *Anthahkaranā*'s parts. Therefore, this mind and buddhi, or *Anthahkaranā*, can only wish, pine, and be consumed by the thought, 'I shouldn't be such an entity separate from *Āthmā*.' But they really cannot reach the state where this distinction falls apart. How can darkness see the sun? As soon as light reaches it, the darkness will disappear, will it not? Here, the darkness didn't destroy itself. Similarly, the mind, which is the *Māyā*-darkness, gets destroyed in the brilliance of *Āthmā*. So after some one gets to the top-most level that is reachable by the mind and buddhi, the *Jīvā* can go to the place that is beyond reach from this very top only if *Īswarā* lifts him up from there. There is no doubt about this.

This aspect deserves a thorough analysis and understanding.

Anthahkaraña cannot touch *Āthmā* no matter how high it gets. Only if it ceases to exist does Self-Realization become possible. How can it cease itself? When some one commits suicide, there is something that is different from himself that is used to accomplish it. It could be a revolver or rope or some such thing. If he jumps into a well, there is water that blocks his breath. Even if he attempts to asphyxiate himself by closing his mouth and nose or stopping his breath, there is this stubborn determination of 'must die', which is different from the body that is dying. There is also the breath to stop that is different from the body. But as long as the *Jīvā* remains as *Jīvā*, there is nothing that is different from his *Anthahkaraña*! When everything that is 'his' is in this *Anthahkaraña*, how can it commit 'suicide' to it by itself? Nonetheless, there *are* people who have got rid of this *Anthahkaraña* and have experienced *Āthmā* in the *samādhi* state! How does this happen?

Īśwarā: Bridge Between Dhvaitha and Adhvaitha

The answer to this is of course, *Īśwarā* and *Īśwarā's* grace. The mode of *Jīvā* is completely Dhvaitham. *Āthmā* is completely Adhvaitham. Therefore, we are unable to make a connection between the mind, which is the cause of the *Jīvā* mode, and *Āthmā*, which has no aspect of *Jīvā*. We wonder how this is possible. This is where *Īśwarā* comes in.

What is *Īśwarā* like? He is like a bridge between *dhavaitha* and Adhvaitha. These two are the opposite shores, which have no point of contact. *Īśwarā* acts as a bridge to connect these opposite shores. Inside, He remains as Adhvaitha, the innate form of *Āthmā*. Outwardly, He carries out His drama of this *dhvaithic* universe and frolics in it. He has fired off *Māyā*, which has bound our mind within a confined, small bundle, while He is not subjected to any such binding by the mind. The Adhvaitha *sāsthrās* say, '*Āthmā* coupled with *Māyā* brought forth both *Īśwarā* and *Jīvā*. However, only the *Jīvā* is helplessly trapped in the mind; *Īśwarā* is not bound by the mind like that.' We might say that *Īśwarā* is the Cosmic Mind, which plans and executes all the worldly affairs. But we must understand that He doesn't have a mind that binds and limits Him. He is capable of doing anything. Even things that are beyond our understanding are possible for Him. We ask, 'How can a *Jīvā's* mind, *buddhi*, or *Anthahkarañā* do this or that?' We cannot ask a similar question, 'How can *Īśwarā* do such a thing?' Since He is not bound by the mind, He can do anything.

Īśwarā is the one who creates a way for the *Jīvā* to reach its unreachable (*Āthmā*) by enabling this *Jīvā* to destroy his *Anthahkarañā* after he has exhausted every possible attempt of using this *Anthahkarañā*. When a *Jīvā* reaches the height of his *Jīvā* mode, realizes that he is still unable to touch *Āthmā*, and is restless for experiencing it, *Īśwarā* comes in, destroys this *Jīvā* mode, ceases the *indhriya*, mind, and *buddhi*, and absorbs this *Jīvā* into His own internal form of *Āthmā*.

Adhvaitha Sāsthrā and Benediction of Īśwarā

You might say that it doesn't seem to be so plainly stated in the Adhvaitha *sāsthrās* that *jnānā* is attained only through *Īśwarā's* benediction. The *jnānā* mentioned by the Adhvaitha *sāsthrā* doesn't denote the knowledge gained by the intellect. The *adhvaithic* state of Self-realization wherein *Āthmā* knows itself by experiencing itself is called *jnānā*. Therefore 'to attain *jnānā*' means 'to attain *mōkshā*'. You might say that the Adhvaitha *sāsthrā* doesn't seem to have explicitly stressed that this materializes only through the grace or benediction of *Īśwarā*. *Bhagawān* did not mention *Īśwara krupa* either. If the reason for this omission is that He is talking about the path of *jnānā* in that context, you might wonder why this shouldn't be mentioned in the context of *jnāna mārga* (path).

One reason comes to mind as an answer to this. The main goal of Adhvaitha is to completely get rid of the Dhvaitha *jnānā* (or, to be precise, the Dhvaitha ajnāna). So what will happen if *Īśwarā* is mentioned in the very last stage of the Adhvaitha *sādhanā*, which is the effort to subdue and destroy the mind? It will be only tantamount to bringing in Dhvaitha again. *Īśwarā* is indeed different from the *Jīvā*. The fact that 'He (*Īśwarā*) bestows grace on him (*Jīvā*)' implies only one thing. It is that *Īśwarā* is of course different from *Jīvā*. In addition, even though *Īśwarā* is the supreme Adhvaitha *swarupi* inside, when He thinks of some one as worthy of His grace, and He bestows the grace on him, this thought and action show only the *dhvaithic* view. Therefore, mentioning Him is prone to giving a lot of room for Dhvaitham. If it is mentioned to a *sādhakā*, who is at the highest state of his Adhvaitha *sādhanā*, it could actually cause him to turn in the direction of Dhvaitha. We might say that the Adhvaitha *śāsthrās* didn't mention that the final materialization (*siddhi*) occurs only through *Īśwara krupa* precisely to avoid giving room for such a possibility. The proponents of the *adhvaithic* philosophy might have thought, 'Just because we don't mention it, the *Krupa Mūrthī* (*Īśwarā*) is not going to withhold His *krupa*. But our mention of *Īśwarā*, on the other hand, could send the *Jīvā* into Dhvaitha in the form of *Īśwara bhakthi*, after all the efforts that were put into the preparation for Adhvaitha. The goal is really attaining oneness (*aikyam*) with Him in *adhvaithic* mode, not doing *bhakthi* towards Him in *dhvaithic* mode. *Īśwarā* Himself would prefer only this. Therefore, let us not mention it.'

There is a *slōkā* that was composed by a very distressed elder who was screaming, 'Oh, no! Do I get *jnānā* abandoning *Īśwara bhakthi*? In that case, it is not *mōkshā* at all, only *mōha* (infatuation). Oh, He is pushing me down into this!' Perhaps the writers of the Adhvaitha *granthās* wanted to prevent the *sādhakā* from turning out like that. They wanted to help the *sādhakā* give up only the *bhakthi* for *Īśwarā*, but not *Īśwarā* Himself. They wanted to help him hold on to *Īśwarā's* internal, innate form, which is really formless, and then dissolve himself into this formless entity. They must have omitted mentioning the *dhvaithic* external form at the highest level of one's *sādhanā* only for this reason.

In the beginning stages, the Adhvaitha *śāsthrās* do prescribe adhering to the *karmās* that are very *dhvaithic* and also worshipping *Īśwarā* in a dhvaithic mode. This is only at the level of training the mind to focus. Dhvaitha can be present there; in fact, it must be present there. Otherwise, the *sādhakā* will lose his moorings, with his mind running in all directions, or he will simply feel bare and void. On the other hand, at a much later stage, when the *sādhakā* has mastered sravana (listening) and *manana* (meditating) and entered into the more intensely meditative state called *nidhidhyāsanā*, his consciousness that just began the process of merging into *Āthmā* shouldn't be disturbed by mentioning Dhvaitha, right?

Brahmam - Āthmā - Īśwarā

The power that hides the principle of *sathya* and produces the scenes and experiences of Dhvaitha is called *Māyā*. Since no entity is external to this principle of *sathya*, these scenes and experiences are also its guises. The hiding of the principle of *sathya* is called *āvaraṅam*. To display the same principle in various guises is called *vikshēpam*. *Māyā* is said to possess both the powers of *āvaraṅam* as well as *vikshēpam*. The one who puts on these guises through the power of *Māyā* is none other than *Īśwarā*. That is, Brahmam Itself becomes *Īśwarā* with the association of *Māyā*, creates the *dhvaithic jagath* (universe) in Itself, and frolics in it.

What is Brahmam? It is one and the same as *Āthmā*. When we inquire into the root of the small *Jīvā*, we call it *Āthmā*. When we do the same inquiry on the big *jagath*, we call it Brahmam. The root of *Jīvā* and the root of *jagath* are one and the same. Both the *Jīvā* and the *jagath* appeared from this one entity. When we say that there is nothing external to *Āthmā*, the *Jīvā*'s root, can Brahmam then be something different? *Āthmā* and Brahmam are one and the same. However, when that one entity of *sathya* is referred with respect to just a *Jīvā*, it is called *Āthmā*, and when it is referred with respect to the *jagath*, which consists of lakhs and lakhs of *jīvās* and crores of inanimate objects, it is called Brahmam.

Jīvā from Īśwarā Only

All *adhvaithis* are of the same opinion that *Āthmā* coupled with *Māyā* has become *Īśwarā*, and again the same *Āthmā* has attained the mode of *Jīvā* through *Māyā*. They also accept the concept that *Īśwarā* rules over the *jagath*, staying above the level of the *jīvās*. However, they do not state conclusively that the *Jīvā* came only from *Īśwarā* or that it is only *Īśwarā* who creates the appearance of the *Jīvā*. They simply say, '*Āthmā* has become *Jīvā* as well as *Īśwarā* through *Māyā*.' They stop short of saying that Brahmam first becomes *Īśwarā* coupling with *Māyā*, and then *Īśwarā* creates the *Jīvā*.

Bhagawān, on the other hand, has spelt it out quite clearly in *Gītā* in the chapter called *Purushōtthama Yōgā*. He refers to Himself as *Purushōtthama*. Who is *Purushōtthama*? He says that *Purushōtthama* is none other than *Īśwarā*, the one who is called *Paramāthmā*; that is, the one who has entered the three worlds and is supporting them. *Āchāryā*'s *bhāshya* for this section doesn't describe it as the *nirguńa* (*guńa*-less) Brahmam, but it says that *Purushōtthama* is in fact the one who is called Narayana, the *Saguńa* Brahmam (with *guńās*). *Bhagawān*, remaining as *Īśwarā*, says:

'mamaivāmsō Jīva lōkē Jīvā bhūtha: sanāthana:
mana: shashtānīndhriyāni prakruthisthāni karshathi' (15-7)

'An *amsa* (part) of Me, who is eternal, appears as *Jīvā* in the *Jīvālōka* (*Jīvā's* world) and draws the mind and the five *indhriyās*, which are imbedded in *Prakruthi*, as it own.'

Here He treats the mind as another *indhriya*, pools it together with the five *indhriyās*, and refers to them as six *indhriyās* - 'shashtāni indhriyani'. Such grouping is also in vogue sometimes. Even *Āchāryā* expresses this opinion in a *sthōthrā* called '*Shatpadhi*' and has performed some word plays using interesting puns.

So, we learn that *Īswarā* has become the *Jīvā* through a miniscule part of Himself. The *Jīvā* has come only from Him. *Prakruthi* is none other than *Māyā*. What does it mean to say that the mind, which is associated with matters pertaining to *Māyā*, is drawn by the *Īswarā amsa* and possessed by it as its own? What else could it mean? - It could only mean that *Īswarā* Himself granted such a mind to the *Jīvā* and ordained it to be engrossed in *Māyā*.

Release Granted by Īswarā Alone

For the same reason, we infer that *Īswarā* is the only one who could liberate the *Jīvā* as well. If He is the one who pulled and attached it, then He is the one who could detach and discard it too, right?

Within the realm of the *Māyā prakruthi*, the qualities with which a man is made into a *Jīvā* are usually referred to as this *Jīvā's prakruthi*. Here, *prakruthi* is meant to denote nature. What we call nature, Mother Nature, etc. in the outside world is also called *prakruthi*. Well, everything is ultimately the creation of *Māyā*, isn't it?

Māyā Subdued Only by Īśwarā

I want to add one more thing here. It is actually related to the same idea that attaining *mōkshā* is only possible if *Īśwarā*, who let the *Jīvā* be engrossed in *Prakruthi*, also releases him from it by His grace.

I had mentioned right in the beginning that *Bhagawān* Himself asked how anyone could curtail *Prakruthi*, even if he is a *jnāni*. Yet, *mōkshā* is feasible only if *Prakruthi*, which is *Māyā*, subsides. The mind is an entity that was created by this *Prakruthi*, or *Māyā*. I have been talking all along about the *Jīvā* attaining *mōkshā* after the subsiding of the mind, but I haven't said anything about the subsiding of *Māyā*. Even the Adhvaitha *śāsthrās* preach the *sādhakā* to subdue the mind; they don't say, 'Subdue *Māyā*.'

Why? Because it is a great power that is superior to the *Jīvā*. It is the very power that created him. Therefore, he is incapable of subduing it. All that he can do is to attempt to draw the mind from *Māyā*'s control. Again, it is *Īśwarā's* grace that makes this attempt fruitful. After the *Jīvā*'s mind subsides like this, something has to keep it from springing up again by the power of *Māyā*. It all started out with *Īśwarā* drawing this mind, *Māyā*'s field of play, and placing it in the mind-less *Āthmā* to create the *Jīvā* mode, didn't it? So the same *Īśwarā* could again make him fall back into the *samsārā* of *Māyā* just when this *Jīvā* makes this mind cease and merges into *Āthmā*, could He not? The fact that so many people have attained Self-Realization without such an impediment makes it clear that *Īśwarā* Himself subdues this power of *Māyā* and grants the attainment of *Āthmā* to the *Jīvā*.

Though rare, several people have successfully subdued their minds, become *jnānis*, and remained forever one with *Āthma swarūpa*. This only means that *Īśwarā*, with His infinite grace, let them remain in that state. *Prakruthi*, which He referred to as untamable even by a *jnāni*, can be tamed by Him and Him alone. It is only His infinite grace, with which He does the taming, that makes the attainment of *mōkshā* possible for anyone.

We were discussing the question of whether the *Jīvā* was created from *Īśwarā*. I just showed that that is indeed how it is mentioned in the *Gītā*.

Jīvā - Īśwarā Difference

A *Jīvā* is subject to both the *avarana śakthi* (power) and the *Vikshēpa śakthi* of *Māyā*. The *avarana śakthi* conceals *Āthmā*, so he is unable to recognize it in its true form. Since his mind and *indhriyās* find their target objects in the affairs of the world of Dhvaitha, the *Vikshēpa śakthi* also reigns over him very strongly.

This is not the case with *Īśwarā*. What is He like? *Īśwarā* is none other than the product of the coupling of *Māyā* with *Āthmā*, or Brahmam. *Āthmā*, or Brahmam, is referred to as such only to denote its state of non-association with *Māyā*. The moment an association forms, we immediately refer to its appearance in this state as *Īśwarā*. If you ask how we can call *Āthmā*, which is not associated with anything, associated with *Māyā*, the answer is that is also its *Māyā*!

Though *Īśwarā* has connections with *Māyā*, there is a lot of difference between Him and the *Jīvā*. *Jīvā* is a power that is below *Māyā* - a significantly lower power. The *Jīvā* is under its control. *Māyā* is the creator of this very mode of *Jīvā*. Though it is the same *Māyā* that has made *Īśwarā* seem to be different from *Āthmā* or Brahmam, it is His own game. He will subdue *Māyā*. *Māyā* is inferior to Him. It can never exercise its authority over Him. The Adhvaitha *śāsthrās* mention Him as subject only to *Māyā*'s *Vikshēpa śakthi*, and then too only to the extent that He conducts the affairs of the *jagath*, whose appearance was created by Him in

Brahmam through Itself and the power of *Māyā*. These *śāsthrās* say that since Brahmam cannot be concealed from Him even by *Māyā*, He is absolutely not subject to its *avarana śakthi*. The statement 'Brahmam cannot be concealed from Him' is meant to denote that He internally remains as Brahmam all the while. Whatever His external revelry, His Self-Realized state isn't affected in the least.

From Dhvaitha to Adhvaitha

Since *Īśwarā* is present in both Dhvaitha and Adhvaitha modes, He is able to serve as a bridge between *Āthmā*, which is all Adhvaitha and is not associated with the mind, and the *Jīvā*'s mind, which is all Dhvaitha and is unable to associate with *Āthmā*. *Īśwarā* renders *Māyā* incapable of concealing *Āthmā* from Him and rules over the *Māya prapancha* (illusory universe) at the same time. He thus has an association with the *Jīvā* from the universe while experiencing the unconcealed expanse of *Āthmā*. Having such connections to both, He is indeed positioned as the bridge to lead one to this vast expanse. We cannot understand the dual role that He plays. Remaining as an incomprehensible riddle forever, He works on the Dhvaitha mind, gradually dissolves it into the Adhvaitha *Āthmā*, and finally merges the entire *Jīvā* into *Āthmā*, making them a single indistinguishable entity.

Perhaps I can try giving an example to clarify this a little bit. Let us take an iron pellet. How can it be evaporated into a gas so that it can mix into the air? It can't do this by itself. They usually fire up a furnace and let it reach the temperature of two to three thousand degrees. The fire itself is nothing but a burning gas. In other words, it is a gas that is burning as fire. At this stage, it is not just an invisible gas, but it is visibly burning with a huge flame, almost blinding the eyes. When the iron pellet is heated in such a flame, it melts into a liquid, and then this liquid evaporates into gas and disappears.

Similarly, the *Anthahkaraña* has solidified into a firm pellet due to the effects of *Māyā* and is lying with a separate *Jīvā* mode in the atmosphere of *Āthmā*, unable to diffuse into it. *Īśwarā* is like the flame in the furnace, which is able to touch the iron, penetrate it through the power of its flame form, and melt it, though the flame itself is a gas. Unlike *Āthmā*, *Īśwarā* can be associated with the *Jīvā*. He can melt the *Jīvā's* mind and liquefy it. Then He can also evaporate it and make it drift and permeate like a gas. He can then let it merge into His formless, gas-like *Āthma swarūpa*, lose its identity, and become one with it.

Intermediate Stages

In the process of solid iron melting into a liquid and then losing its form and becoming a gas, there are numerous stages in which it is neither solid nor gaseous. Similarly, *Īśwarā* grants so many intermediate stages that are neither grasped by the Dhvaitha mind nor united in the state of Adhvaitha. We can only keep asking, 'How is this possible?' The answer will come only if we reach these stages ourselves. But then, whatever we learn there cannot be conveyed to others! This is because the learning occurs while going above the Dhvaitha world, and the place where it needs to be conveyed is in this Dhvaitha world. It can be comprehended only when those stages of experience are reached. It can't be explained using words and reasoning. Can a taste such as sweetness or a color such as red be explained using words or logical reasoning alone? At the most, a vague sense of them can be hinted at. That's all. It is in fact questionable as to whether we could ever come back to this Dhvaitha *lōka* full of *jīvās* after experiencing the stages that are above Dhvaitha. But then, *Īśwarā* has blessed this world with several *jnānis* and has had them provide instructions and benedictions. Why did they not mention it either? For the same reason that one can't describe the frigidity experienced in Ooty in the midst of a heat wave of one hundred ten degrees at Madras. Similarly, a concept experienced at a higher level is often not possible to bring down to a lower level.

When we say that the iron melts and loosens up into a liquid and then drifts and spreads as gas, it means that whatever was hard and heavy is gradually getting softer and lighter. When it becomes very light, it loses its form entirely and disappears. Similarly, the hard, egocentric mind that has a strong sense of 'I' keeps getting softer and lighter when it receives the grace of *Īśwarā* after a prolonged practice of *sādhanā*. In the hardened stage, only a small sliver of the ray of chaithanya is reflected in the *Jīvā*'s mind. When it loosens and softens up, just as the image of the sun is clearly reflected in a liquid, a beam of chaithanya penetrates and fills the mind. Even so, an image is still different from its reflection. Only when this liquid is further lightened up and it becomes a gas does it lose its form completely, become indistinguishable in the field of light, and become one with it. Similarly, the *Jīvā* is absorbed with the characteristics and power of *Īśwarā* during the intermediate stages of *bhakthi laya* (absorption) and *yōgā laya*. Then, during the attainment of *jnānā*, he becomes one with the attribute-less, peaceful *Āthma swarūpa*, devoid of any distinction. (Though it is called *Āthmā* '*swarūpa*', it is really '*arūpa*' or form-less!)

While traveling on the bridge between Dhvaitha and Adhvaitha, the hard form of the mind of the *Jīvā* keeps turning softer and softer.

Unlike solids, liquids are capable of spreading. Gases spread even farther than liquids and are capable of traversing long distances. The iron pellet takes amazingly different shapes when it changes into a liquid and a gas, making us wonder whether it is the same iron pellet. Then it totally vanishes as a formless entity. In the same manner, when the mind of the *Jīvā* melts and spreads out, or when it enlarges, losing its confined, hard tendency, it changes into amazing forms, making us wonder whether it is the same mind. Losing the tight fastening that exists in the Dhvaitha mode, it expands towards Adhvaitha and spreads out. This is the reason why it acquires supernatural powers that the mind of the *Jīvā* is incapable of having. It goes through supernatural experiences. It seems to be able to perceive things that happen somewhere else or in some one else's mind, as well as things that happened or will happen at some other time. What does it mean? It simply means that it assumes *Īswarā's* characteristics by being absorbed into His simultaneous dual role of Dhvaitha and Adhvaitha during the transition from the total *dhvaithic* stage. *Īswarā* is not confined into any one entity but is omnipresent, pervading all places, hearts, and times, isn't He? Since He is one in all, He is *adhvaithic.* Since we have to mention this 'all', meaning so many things, He is also *dhvaithic.* He is not just the one *adhvaithic* entity as in *'Ēkamēva adhvithīyam'.* Instead, He is the one principle that is in the multitudes of entities. The *Jīvā* transitions from the full Dhvaitha to this dual *Īswarā,* immersed in Him, transforming his hard mind into an enlarged form, and then goes up and up towards Adhvaitha and reaches higher stages of experiences. Only after this, just as the iron pellet that could not be diffused into the atmosphere was eventually transformed into a gas, *Īswarā* indistinguishably absorbs the *Jīvā* completely in His internal, totally *adhvaithic* state.

It might appear to us that the completely *dhvaithic* state that we are in right now cannot meet with the totally *adhvaithic* state of Brahmam. But beyond a certain stage, some intermediate states are reached wherein the Dhvaitha gets more and more diluted and the concentration of Adhvaitha keeps increasing in the practice of the *Jīvā*'s worship. 'Prior to the stage of Adhvaitha, everything has the *dhvaithic* aspect of the object that is worshipped and the subject who does the worshipping. These are all simply *upāsanā* (worship), not *jnānā* - Adhvaitha is the only *jnānā*' says *Āchāryā.*

The same *Āchāryā* says that among these *upāsanās*, there are some that keep lifting one up to higher levels up to Adhvaitha. *Chāndhōgya* Upanishad details a lot of *upāsanās*. *Āchāryā* has composed an *upōthkatha* (preface) called '*sambandha bhāshya*' for this Upanishad. In this *upōthkatha*, he says, 'This enumerates a lot of *upāsanās* such as: '*abhyudhayam*', which are *upāsanās* related to *karmā*, which provide highly acclaimed worldly benefits; '*kaivalya sannikrishtapalāni*', which are *upāsanās* that provide the benefit of taking us closer to *kaivalya mōkshā*; and '*Adhvaithāth ishathvikrutha Brahmā vishayani*', which are *upāsanās* aimed at Brahmam, which is only a tiny bit removed from Adhvaitha.' This clarifies this matter more vividly. That is, he says that there are several *upāsanās* that lead to Adhvaitha *jnānā*, without themselves being Adhvaitha *jnānā,* per se.

However, it is true that the Adhvaitha books do not say explicitly, 'when practicing intense self inquiry called *nidhidhyāsanā*, *Īśwarā* takes over the mind of the *Jīvā* and merges it into *Āthmā*.' It only says that if you keep persisting on the self-inquiry, at one stage, the inquiry will also cease by itself and the self-luminous *Āthmā* will glow on its own. It elaborates as follows: One must receive formal instruction from a guru on the Upanishad *Mahā vākyās* that detail the non-differentiation of the *Jīvā* and Brahmam. Then he must keep meditating on it and ascertain it firmly. To let this ascertained knowledge sink in deeply, he should take up a highly intensive meditation called *nidhidhyāsanā*. As he keeps doing this, all of a sudden, one day, the *Brahma jnānā* will be born in a flash.

Variants of Upadēsā Corresponding to the Stage of Rightful Recipient

These days, everything is taught to everyone. This was not the practice in the olden days. The gurus would impart knowledge only to those who deserved it, qualified for it, and had earned a right to it. They wouldn't instruct a high level principle, a discipline that requires a great level of determined, committed practice, to the average body of the population. An average person is more likely to find it difficult to understand, find it difficult to commit to practicing properly even if understood, practice the wrongly understood principle and bring untoward, harmful effects, etc. Since there were no printing presses back then, only a few copies of such instructions were written as *śāsthrās* on palm leaf manuscripts. These were used only to pass on to those who were considered qualified, deserving, and earned the rights for it. Higher level, important matters were not ubiquitously available in books produced on a mass scale, accessible to anyone who wished to peruse them to pass time or for curiosity.

Even if I present such principles that are not comprehensible for general population during my addresses to a large gathering, it is wrong if I insist that everyone should practice them right now. However, even an average person who is caught up in *Māyā* all the time should contemplate the existence of *Āthmā*, which transcends *Māyā*, at least a little bit everyday. I give discourses on Adhvaitha with just this intention of enabling everyone to do so. We who belong to the mutt established by *Āchāryā* have the duty to expound this to everyone so that this supreme principle won't be lost. Even then, we should tell the common folk that this Adhvaitha consciousness should be contemplated only a little bit everyday, and not ask all of them to drop everything right now and sit down and start the self-inquiry. It is only tantamount to asking for something that is impossible to do. If people who haven't earned the right to it attempt to do that, much harm and hardship will result. Therefore, we must stop with the extensive explanation of the *dhvaithic karmā* and *bhakthi* to the common folk. After stressing it well enough to make them get down to practicing it, we should simply stop with reminding them about the ultimate goal of Adhvaitha.

Bhagawān has ordained in *Gītā*, 'The common folk, who tend to be attached only to action, shouldn't be confused by being told all about the truth expounded by *Vēdhānthā*, which is actionless.'

Only after gradually conditioning those who are currently the rightful recipients of just Dhvaitha should we impart the matters regarding the practice of the Adhvaitha *sādhanā*. Starting out mostly with Dhvaitha, we should keep reducing it little by little, and then we should increase the instruction on Adhvaitha extensively.

The *upadēsā* should differ corresponding to the rightful recipients of either Dhvaitha or Adhvaitha. In our current undertaking, we need to pay attention to the instruction that says, 'Those who have earned the rights only for Dhvaitha should in fact be told about the *adhvaithic* goal right from the beginning, at least a little bit. Then, conditioning them gradually, they should be turned into rightful recipients of Adhvaitha.' This implies that these people shouldn't be limited only to the *upadēsā* on Dhvaitha. On the other hand, after they have been conditioned to receive *adhvaithic* instruction, they shouldn't be given any *dhvaithic* instruction at all. The instruction should be completely nailed on Adhvaitha, without letting their thoughts digress into Dhvaitha even here and there, in order to place them squarely on it.

Only the *dhvaithis* should gradually learn about the stages beyond Dhvaitha that they need to progress to. The Adhvaitha *sadhākās* need not think about matters related to Dhvaitha, which they had just graduated from. They must actually forget them. This is the reason why *sāsthrās* that are meant for them do not elaborate on *Īswarā* or *Īswarā's* grace, which are inherently *dhvaithic* or Dhvaitha-*adhvaithic*.

In our nation, philosophies do not stop at just the intellectual level, but they are also carried on into elaborate traditions of practice to receive their experiences. It is not at all appropriate to give lectures without checking to see whether the recipients have earned the right to them and are capable of observing the practices. It is not prudent to lecture on philosophies such as Adhvaitha in a democratic spirit to everyone when such philosophies could be brought into practical experience only after a lengthy and difficult *sādhanā*.

[Note: Most of the sections in this talk were not given in public discourses. They were given by Sri Charanar only to select groups of *sadhākās* or scholars, or as answers in response to the questions of a very few *sadhākās*. In the opinion of the compiling editor, the justification for including them here, which would reach a wider audience, is derived from a portion of the same talk that appears later. That is, Sri Charanar has shown that *Bhagawān Krishṅā* has revealed several opinions that have not been explicitly stated in the Adhvaitha *śāsthrā*, during the course of His *Gītōpadēśa*. He gave these not only for those who had significantly progressed in the Adhvaitha *sādhanā*, but also for anyone who had a general interest in spiritual matters. Similarly, though perhaps not progressing significantly in any specific path, most of the people who would read this book would have some interest in spiritual matters. Therefore, the expositions of Sri Charanar concerning the linkage between Dhvaitha and Adhvaitha paths have been included. It is to be noted that we have included this only along with a great amount of his expositions on *karmā* and *bhakthi* as well.]

Adhvaitha *śāsthrās* have been written only for the sake of those who have the capacity to undertake self-inquiry after progressing well through the observance of *karmā* and *upāsanā* and then renouncing them to take up *sanyāsa*, receiving the *Mahā* *vākya upadēśā*. As mentioned earlier, the reason for not explicitly mentioning the *dhvaithic Īśwara krupa* is only because of the opinion that they should be anchored firmly on Adhvaitha as long as their *sādhanā* is based only at the intellectual level. The *śāsthrās* do say that higher and higher stages are reached in the course of the *nidhidhyāsanā*, finally culminating in the cessation of the mind and the materialization of Self-Realization. However, they don't emphasize at this stage the role of *Īśwarā*, who is different from him, saying that such higher stages are bestowed only through *Īśwara krupa*.

Īśwarā is a great *Māyāvi* (trickster). It is said that not an atom will move without Him. Even so, He has kept us in a stage wherein we do not at all understand that He is the one who is making us think by entering into our mind. When our thoughts are chaotic, we feel, 'Certainly, these couldn't be His thoughts; these kinds of thoughts wouldn't meet with His approval.' We pray right to Him to help encourage good thoughts. The meaning of the Gayathri *manthrās* is just that. Therefore, even though we say that everything is *Īśwarā's* action, it seems as though He wants to see whether we get any wiser after being bumped and thrashed around in the process of performing something as 'our action'. He seems to have given us this mind just for this purpose and seems to be watching with amusement. If everything is only according to His plan, and everything is only His action, we don't need to perform any *sādhanā* to reform and salvage ourselves, do we?

How far would He let us go in allowing our mind to indulge in whatever it desires? When would He take it all over without allowing us any leeway? No one can say for sure. Therefore, He might play His games even with the mind that has been elevated gradually by Him after it entered into self-inquiry, right before He takes it over completely. That is, even at that stage, *Īśwarā* might allow the *Jīvā*'s mind to have its independent thoughts and make its decisions. In such a high-level stage, the *Jīvā* might start thinking, 'This *dhvaithic Īśwara krupa* is indeed very good! Therefore, why not stop with just doing the *dhvaithic bhakthi* towards this *Īśwarā*?' Then how could this *Jīvā* become one with this same *Īśwarā's* formless, attribute-less true Self? If *Īśwarā* played the game till the very end, thinking, 'Let me grant what the *Jīvā* is asking for out of his own desire,' how could he then attain the *adhvaithic* state?

Why Śāsthrā for Īśwarā's Action?

Īśwarā Himself might let him get absorbed in Self-Realization without revealing the means as His *krupa*. If such Self-Realized people wrote the *śāsthrās* later, they would not be likely to mention *Īśwara krupa* in them. Alternatively, even if He reveals Himself and His grace quite clearly to the *sadhākās*, they would be able to infer, 'By taking control of us, He takes us up little by little. As He keeps doing this, our intellectually based *sādhanā* also ceases. A power that is superior to us is making us do something.'

Sāsthrās can only outline the way for performing intellectual based *sādhanā*. After *Īśwarā* takes over some one's intellect little by little and starts to use him as His instrument to get things done, how can *śāsthrās* give any guidance for it? *Sāsthrās* are only for things that a *sādhakā* has to do, not for what *Īśwarā* has to do. That is why the elders have provided the Adhvaitha *śāsthrās*, thinking, 'Let the *Jīvā* do his intellectually based *nidhidhyāsanā* as long as he needs to. Let us then leave him up to *Īśwarā* to take over and do whatever He needs to do by Himself. Let us not go to that stage, give any injunctions, and make the mind of the *Jīvā* get entrenched in them. Let us not say anything to him who is subject to being overpowered by *Īśwarā*. It is enough to simply say, 'keep doing the *nidhidhyāsanā*; the attainment will come on its own' and leave it at that.' Instead of explicitly saying that the curtain of *Māyā* is torn by the grace of *Īśwarā*, they have concluded this part with a mention of something vague: 'it is torn by the intensity of the *nidhidhyāsanā* itself.'

Explicitly Expounded Truth in Gītā

However, *Bhagawān* has mentioned this (that the goal of Adhvaitha is realized through the grace of *Īśwarā*) quite explicitly in several places in *Gītā*. He didn't impart it indiscriminately either. While concluding this part, He says, 'This *Gītā śāsthrā* must not be imparted to anyone who doesn't possess thapas and *bhakthi* and does not do service.' Unlike the other Adhvaitha *śāsthrās*, the *Gītā* that He preached is not limited only to those who have reached an advanced stage in the Adhvaitha *sādhanā*. Out of the eighteen chapters of the Bhagavad *Gītā*, the first six are called *karmā shadkam*, the middle six are called *bhakthi shadkam*, and only the last six are called *jnānā shadkam*. This doesn't mean only the respective paths are mentioned in each of these groups of six chapters. For instance, He mentions the concept that *Āthmā* transcends the intellect, which belongs to the path of *jnānā*, in the third chapter, which is within the *karmā shatka*. However, in an overall sense, the *Gītā* is in fact classifiable in this manner. The *granthās* that exclusively detail Adhvaitha do not touch upon *karmā* and *upāsanā* this elaborately; there is very limited mention of these aspects in these *granthās*. Other than acknowledging their necessity in the beginning stages, they don't elaborate on them any further. Thus, even though *Bhagawān* did make sure that His instructions were only directed at deserving disciples, He didn't limit them only to those who were about to enter the stage of self-inquiry. He aimed His *Gītōpadēsa* towards everyone, even the ones who desire to climb the very first step of the ladder of the spiritual life, following any one of the paths of *karmā*, *bhakthi*, or *jnānā*. Therefore it contains a lot of information concerning the Dhvaitha mārga (path) of *bhakthi* as well as Adhvaitha. Since He has covered both of them quite extensively, the question might arise, 'What is this? He is talking about Dhvaitha (*bhakthi*), and then He is also talking about Adhvaitha (*jnānā*). Isn't Adhvaitha opposite of Dhvaitha?' To prevent such doubts from arising, He also mentions a lot of details linking these two. This is where He happens to mention, '*Īśwarā* is the one who lifts up the *Jīvā* from Dhvaitha to Adhvaitha.' This is not touched upon very much in the *śāsthrās* that are exclusively meant for Adhvaitha. He lucidly explains such details as, '*Māyā* is not torn by the *sādhanā* of the *sādhakā*; only *Īśwara krupa* tears it up.'

Arjuna was not such a '*Sānkya*' (*jnānā*) *sādhakā*, who could take up *Sanyāsā* and go completely in the path of Adhvaitha. That is, he was not a *utthamādhikāri* (rightful recipient at the highest level). He was only a '*yōgā*' *sādhakā*, who could perform his *swadharama karmā* as *Īśwarā ārādhanā* (dedicated to *Īśwarā*) without being concerned about its fruits and cleanse his thoughts. That is, he was only a *madhyamādhikari* (rightful recipient at the medium level). *Āchāryā* has established this interpretation in his *bhāshya*. *Madhyama* means middle. It can become a link between *utthama* (highest) and *adhama* (lowest). Therefore, while teaching the *utthamōtthama* state to him, *Bhagawān* mentions *Īśwarā*, who is the link between Dhvaitha and Adhvaitha, and His *krupa*.

In one context (*Gītā* 7-14), He says, '*Māyā*, which is in the form of *sathva-rajō-thamo guṇās* , is my energy. Therefore, it possesses the divine energy. How can a human being cross it using only his strength? Only by surrendering to me can he cross it with my grace.'

In another context (*Gītā* 18-62), He says that if one surrenders to *Īśwarā* in all his *bhāvās* (mode of feeling), he can attain the everlasting peaceful state of Adhvaitha *mōkshā* through His grace.

Even if one keeps doing *bhakthi* with a Dhvaitha *bhāvā*, he can gradually realize his inner Self (making this realization possible is also His grace!) and eventually merge into this Self, becoming one with it in the Adhvaitha mode. This is *Bhagawān*'s *upadēsā* (advice) (*Gītā* 18-55).

Īśwarā's Knowledge Grant, Also Mentioned by Ādhi Śankarā

Our *Āchāryā* didn't totally refrain from mentioning this aspect of the ultimate *jnānā* attained only through *Īśwara krupa*, either; he does make a few such references here and there.

Not just in his *bhakthi sthōthrās* such as 'SoundhĀ*ryā* Lahari', *'Sivānandhā Lahari'*, etc., but even in a few references here and there in *jnānā granthās*, he does mention that *Paramāthmā* Himself grants *mōkshā* after dispelling *Māyā*. Such mentions in his *bhakthi sthōthrās* are not really very significant. We can give an explanation for this in a way that is quite similar to the argument for leaving out the mention of the *dhvaithic Īśwarā's* grace while addressing the *sadhākās* of *jnāna mārga*. His reasoning for saying this in the *bhakthi sthōthrās* could be as follows. 'Let me not tell those who follow the path of *bhakthi* that the attainment of the goal is only through the *nidhidhyāsanā*, which is an inquiry practiced along the path of *jnānā*. While doing *bhakthi*, the mind which gets used to being focused in the process, will begin to go in the path of *jnānā* on its own, in search of its basis, and in the end it will attain *siddhi* (Self-Realization). What is going to follow its own course is definitely going to happen. There is no need for me to say it right now. The *sadhākās* of the *bhakthi* mārga might even start wondering why they should go towards some *jnānā*, Adhvaitha, and so on, beyond their *Īśwara bhakthi*. Or, alternatively, they might wonder, 'what is the use of *bhakthi* if the direct path to *mōkshā* is *jnānā*'. This might make them give up *bhakthi*. But then, these *sadhākās* don't yet have the mental focus that is necessary for such self-inquiry, right? The whole purpose of preaching *bhakthi* first is precisely to develop such focus, isn't it? Considering all these aspects, let me not create any confusion at this state that they are currently in. Let me simply say that *jnānā*, *mōkshā*, Adhvaitha, etc. materialize only because of the grace of *Īśwarā*, which is very well acceptable to them.' Thinking along these lines, *Āchāryā* might have mentioned it in those *bhakthi sthōthrās*. However, when such a mention is made in his works of *bhāshya granthās* and *prakaraña granthās* on *jnāna mārga* instead, it carries a lot higher value.

[Note: *Bhāshya granthās* are his works containing elaborate commentaries for *śāsthrās* that were already existing, such as Brahma Sūthras, Upanishads, Bhagavad *Gītā*, and so on. The ones that he had composed himself, such as *Vivēka Chūdāmañi*, *Upadēśa sahasri*, *Aparōkshanūbhuthi*, etc. are called *prakaraña granthās*.]

We already saw why he couldn't emphasize it or elaborate on it in the Adhvaitha *granthās*. Even so, as though he felt that he shouldn't leave this fact out completely, he has made a mention of it in at least a few places.

Had *Āchāryā* mentioned it in the context of his commentary for verses of *Gītā* such as, 'Surrender to *Īśwarā* in all your *bhāvās* (hues of emotion); you will attain the everlasting, peaceful state of Adhvaitha *mōkshā* through His grace,' it would not be of tremendous significance. However, when he inserts this concept and mentions its greatness in his *bhāshyās* in contexts in the original *granthās* that do not particularly refer to this grace of *Īśwarā*, it becomes very significant. For instance, in the same eighteenth chapter, before talking about this piece on surrendering in all the *bhāvās*, *Bhagawān* says, 'One must never give up his designated *karmā*. He must perform those very *swakarmās* and *swadharmās* as a dedication to *Īśwarā* to gratify Him. In that case, he attains *siddhi.* That is, (according to *Āchāryā bhāshya*) he becomes qualified for *jnānā* nishtā. Let me now explain how he then attains Brahman, which is the highest level of the *jnānā* nishtā.' *Bhagawān* simply says that one who performs his *karmā* as a dedication to *Īśwarā* becomes conditioned for self-inquiry, and He then goes on to mention all the things that he must do. He does not at all say in this context that *Īśwarā* grants this conditioning. However, *Āchāryā* brings in the *Īśwara krupa* here by saying, 'Performing his *swakarmā* as a dedication to *Īśwarā*, attaining the *siddhi* of *jnānā* nishtā that was born from the grace of *Īśwarā* A' *Āchāryā* uses the word 'thathprasadhajam' in his *bhāshya* for this, while the original verse makes no mention of *Īśwara prasādam* (gift). Through this, he clarifies that adherence to *swakarmā* doesn't provide the qualification for Self-inquiry on its own - this qualification is obtained only when *Īśwarā* grants it as the effect of such adherence. Such an addition in the *bhāshya* for something that was left out in the original carries a very special significance.

It is the stand of the *adhvaithis* that only *Īśwarā* provides the fruits of *karmā* - *karmā* doesn't do this on its own. These *adhvaithis* have strongly denounced the Pūrva *Mīmāmsākās*, who claim, '*karmā* gives the fruits on its own; there is no need to bring in an *Īśwarā* for this.' They have stated emphatically that the fruit-provider for everything is indeed *Īśwarā*, who conducts all the affairs of the world. Nevertheless, they specify Him as *phala-dhāthā* (fruit provider) only in the world of *karmā* that is under the control of *Māyā*; they do not specifically show that it is *Īśwarā* who bestows the fruits at each stage of the *jnāna sādhanā* in the process of getting released from *Māyā*. They simply say, '*Chitthā* gets purified by *karma yōgā*; when *chitthā* is so purified, the *Jīvā* becomes conditioned to start doing self-inquiry.' They do not go so far as to say, 'As a fruit for their *karma yōgā*, *Īśwarā* grants purity of *chitthā* and conditions a *Jīvā* for *jnānā* nishtā.' But here, *Āchāryā* conveys this concept quite explicitly.

Āchāryā mentioned this need for *Īswara krupa* in transitioning from *karmā* to *jnānā* in the final chapter of *Gītā*, which primarily elaborates the process of taking up *Sanyāsā* after all the *karmās* are used up. The first step for this starts in the second chapter. After expounding elaborately on *jnānā Vēdhānthā* philosophies first, *Bhagawān* starts to discuss *karma yōgā*, saying, 'I was explaining *Sānkya* so far. I will start talking about *yōgā* now.' (2-39) The common perception is that *Sānkya* denotes only the *Sānkya sāsthrā* expounded by Kapila and *yōgā* denotes only the raja *yōgā* given by Pathanjali. *Bhagawān*, on the other hand, talks about *jnāna mārga* as *Sānkya* and *Karma* mārga as *yōgā*. Even as He begins to start talking about the *yōgā* in which *swakarmā* is performed without any attachment, He says, 'Though this is a *yōgā* that involves performing *karmā*, this very same thing also severs the bond of *karmā*.' If the *karmā* is performed out of desire with the aim of attaining its fruits, it creates the bondage of *samsārā*. When performed for the sake of the welfare of the world and for the purification of the *chitthā*, without any desire, or an eye towards its fruits, the same *sāsthric karmā* severs the bond. In that *slōkā*, *Bhagawān* simply says, 'Sever it like this, dear son.' - *'karma bandham prahāsyasi'* - 'Sever the binding of *karmā*' says He.

Again, here *Āchāryā* feels that he shouldn't fail to mention it even if *Bhagawān* doesn't. Therefore, he explains in his *bhāshya*, 'Having the grace of *Īswarā* as the cause and attaining *jnānā*, sever the bond of *karmā*, which is a bundle of dharma and *adharma*.' That is, he confirms that *karma yōgā* doesn't yield the fruits on its own, but *Īswarā* is the one who acts as *phala-dhāthā*. There is another important issue here. *Āchāryā* doesn't simply stop with mentioning the reason as *Īswarā's* grace, or '*Īswara prasāda* nimittha.' He clarifies it further as to how *Īswarā* cuts this bondage of *karmā* for a person who performed the *swadharma karmā* - He does it by making the *Jīvā* attain *jnānā*. The *bhāshya* says, '*Īswara* *prasāda* nimittha *jnānā* prapthe:' The 'coming' of *jnānā* is more important than the 'disappearance' of *karmā*. *Āchāryā* has expressed the opinion with absolute certainty that *Īśwarā* grants a *Jīvā* the status of discarding all his *karmā* in order to pave the way for attaining *jnānā*.

Thus, *Āchāryā* has shown that right from sowing the seed for *karma yōgā* in *Gītā*, up to the stage wherein it withers out on its own and leads one into the action-less state (*nishkarmā*), it is none other than *Īśwara krupa* that destroys the *karmā* through this *yōgā* and merges the *Jīvā* into *jnānā*. In the place where he concludes like this, in answer to those who ask, 'How can *Āthmā* be captured by *buddhi*?' he says, 'Those who obtain a guru's *prasāda* and then obtain the *prasāda* of the Self will know how this happens.' - 'labdha *gurvaāthmā* prasādhānām'. Here, *prasāda* in the context of '*guruprasāda*' denotes '*anugraham*' or blessing, and in the context of '*Āthmā prasādam*', it denotes a 'clear or serene state'. The underlying meaning is that those who have attained purity or clarity of the *Anthahkaraṅa* by the grace of a guru can capture *Āthmā*. He has said this in support of the statement made earlier, which mentioned that the *Anthahkaraṅa* (*buddhi* is included in that), which was *dhvaithic* in the beginning kept gradually transitioning into being *adhvaithic* and finally became one with the *adhvaithic Āthmā*. Again, he doesn't stop with talking about the *Jīvā*'s clarity of *Anthahkaraṅa* alone, but also mentions the power of the grace of a guru, who appears different from this *Jīvā*. Though the original verse makes no note of this, *Āchāryā* addresses it in his *bhāshya* since he feels that it is imperative to mention the significance of the grace.

Guru is none other than a representative of *Īśwarā*. *Īśwarā* is the primary guru of all the gurus. 'sa purveshāmapi guru:' (*Yōga Sūthra* 1-26) - 'The first guru, who preceded all other gurus is *Īśwarā*.' It is the tenet of our religion that in the form of a guru, *Īswarā* Himself leads a *Jīvā* into the right path. Therefore, the guru *prasāda* mentioned here is nothing but *Īswara prasāda* or *Īswara krupa*.

Another important aspect comes out of this too. All the Adhvaitha *sāsthrās* are meant only for those who are somewhat conditioned to go in the *jnāna mārga*. That is why, even though *karmā Anushtānā* (observance) and *bhakthi upāsanā* are mentioned as the beginning stages in them, they don't elaborate further on the rules and regulations concerning them, but give importance only to the philosophical inquiry. We just saw that they do not mention the grace of *Īswarā* that is obtained in the last stage, in in accordance with the logic of Adhvaitha. Even among the Adhvaitha *granthās* composed by *Āchāryā*, the *prakaraṅa granthās* such as *Vivēka Chūdāmaṅi*, *Upadēsa sahasri*, *Aparōkshanūbhuthi*, etc., which were his original compositions, are also meant for those who claim that their goal is only Adhvaitha, as opposed to the *bhāshyās* for *Gītā*, Upanishads, Brahma Sūthras, etc. Similarly, the compositions of *Āchāryā*'s successors are also meant for the advanced students of Adhvaitha. Therefore, they don't explicitly mention the *Īswarā anugraha*, which is *dhvaithic*. In spite of this, even these books start with a thanksgiving invocation of *Īswarā* or guru as a *mangala slōkā*. These *slōkās* contain verses that state that *jnānā* materializes because of *Īswarā's* grace. This is the other important aspect that I was referring to earlier.

Several Adhvaitha *granthās* such as *Vivēka Chūdāmaṅi* start with a description of a *sishya* prostrating to a guru in total surrender, seeking his refuge. They also end with accounts of those students reporting that they received supreme, *adhvaithic* experience because of His grace and offering their salutation with immense gratitude. All these are proof of Adhvaitha*'s* acceptance of the concept that attainment of *jnānā* occurs only because of *Īśwarā's* grace.

Dhvaitha of Guru Not a Snag

The mention of *Īśwarā*, a principle that is not visible, seems to be a somewhat unnecessary *dhvaithic* aspect to some one who desires to become *adhvaithic*. However, in practical reality, this person is also in need of some instructions and blessings from a Self-Realized soul. Therefore, when such a benefactor is shown to him as a guru with a concrete human form that his eyes can comprehend, its Dhvaitha doesn't trip him. It appears as a Dhvaitha that is in support of Adhvaitha.

An example can clarify this concept. Most of the people who seek *Rāmā*na *Mahā*rishi's audience, especially the westerners, desire to follow the *adhvaithic* philosophy. Bringing in *Īśwarā* wouldn't suit their self-inquiry. Nevertheless, even they honor him by addressing him as 'Guru' and 'Master' and mention that they received a great experience through his *anugraha* (blessing). For that matter, he never claims himself to be a guru, nor does he address the people who come to him as *śishyās*! Even more intriguing than this is the reaction of the followers of J. *Krishṅāmūrthī*, who is of the opinion that no guru is necessary and nothing should be pigeonholed into a confining philosophy. Those who seek him out consider him as a guru with reverence and recount how they feel enlightened by his power.

Therefore, we see that the *adhvaithis*, though not bringing about the strong feeling of Dhvaitha by the mention of *Īśwarā anugraham*, also glorify the same thing as guru *prasāda*. In several works such as '*Guruvāshtakam*', *Āchāryā* has also expressed this concept quite strongly and clearly with great *bhakthi* and gratitude.

Māyā Ṣakthi also Grants Jnānā

In his *bhāshya* for *Kēnōpanishad*, *Āchāryā* seems to be expressing in a subtle, 'telling without telling' manner, the concept that *Īśwarā* is *jnānā* personified and He is the real bestower of *jnānā*. This Upanishad contains an allusion to *Ambāḻs upadēśā* to Indra, 'Whoever does whatever, it is really not done through his own innate power; it is only through the power of Brahmam that anyone is able to do anything.' In the original verse, *Ambāḻ* is mentioned only as, 'one with great luster, and one who is named Uma and Hymavathi.' However, in the *bhāshya* that explains each word as well as the *bhāshya* that explains each sentence, *Āchāryā* refers to *Ambāḻ* again and again as *Vidhyā*. '*Vidhyā*' means '*jnānā*'. *Jnānā* only means *Brahma jnānā* in Adhvaitha. That is, it is the same Adhvaitha *jnānā* in which a *Jīvā* experiences the Brahmam as his own *Āthmā*. When the Upanishads refer to several kinds of *upāsanās* as *vidhyā*, they qualify each of those *vidhyās* by adding the name of that *upāsanā* as its adjective. In contrast, when *Vidhyā* is simply mentioned without any qualifying adjective, it only denotes *Brahmā Vidhyā* or *Āthma jnānā*. Since *Āchāryā* has written the *bhāshya* saying, 'among all the luminous entities, the supremely luminous is only *Vidhyā*,' and thus has described *Ambāḻ* as *Vidhyā*, it is ascertained that he has described Her as none other than the innate form of *Brahmā Vidhyā*.

Avidhyā means ignorance (or ajnāna). *Āchāryā* refers to *Māyā* as *Avidhyā*. (Later, *adhvaithis* did come up with an opinion that differentiated *Māyā* and *Avidhyā* slightly. They categorize *Māyā* as some sort of a magical power that makes one thing appear as another and *Avidhyā* as the state of ignorance that is unaware of the truth (or *sathya*). They say that when Brahmam couples with *Māyā*, it becomes *Īśwarā* and when it is bound by *Avidhyā*, it becomes a *Jīvā*. Let's leave it at that for now.) *Āchāryā* goes one step higher than the *adhvaithis* who claim that *Īśwarā* still remains a *jnānā swarupi* even though His *Īśwarā* mode is a result of *Māyā Sakthi*'s association with Brahmam; he mentions that *Ambāḻ* is *Vidhyā* Herself. The *upāsanā* that worships *Ambāḻ* as Raja Rajeswari is itself called Sri *Vidhyā*. *Āchāryā* has fostered this worship through *yanthra prathishta* (establishing yanthra - or physical construction that captures its essence), SoundhĀryā Lahari *sthōthrā*, etc. *Āchāryā* refers to Her, who is *Māyā* Herself, as *Vidhyā*, also known as *Jnānā*mbika. Since he has also said that *mōkshā* is actually the state where *Māyā* is removed, we see that he is showing how the same power that administers the world through *Māyā* also releases one from it.

Bondage of Karmā Due to Īśwarā; Attainment of Jnānā Also Due to Him

Even in the *bhāshya* for Brahma Sūthra, there are examples where the original *grantha* doesn't mention *Īśwarā anugraha*, but *Āchāryā* cites these as the cause for *jnānā* in his *bhāshya*. Even in the original Sūthra, it states in one place (Brahma Sūthra 3-2-5), 'The *Jīvāthmā-Paramāthmā abēdha jnānā* (knowledge of non-differentiation) lies hidden within the *Jīvā*. This hidden knowledge will come out through meditatiion on *Paramēśwarā*, because it is only from Him that *Jīvā* acquires both his *bandham* (bondage) and his *Mōksham* (release).' In such instances, if *Āchāryā* mentions the attainment of *adhvaita siddhi* through *Īśwarā anugraha*, it is not particularly significant. In the same Brahma Sūthra, another section analyzes questions such as whether the *Jīvā* is the *kartha* (doer), and if he is really the action-performing *kartha*, how the *Samādhi*, which is actionless, would occur to him. After this analysis, it also reports the conclusion, 'He is the *kartha*, and he is the *Āthmā*, which doesn't have any actions, as well.' If you ask, 'How can both of these be possible?' it answers, 'like a carpenter.' The same carpenter, who uses tools such as the saw while doing his carpentry work, is without any work when he puts his tools down, comes home, and rests, isn't he? Similarly, it says that a *Jīvā*, who uses his *indhriyās* as his tools while being a *kartha*, lays them down in *Samādhi* and rests in the *Āthmā*. It adds that the *Jīvā* obtains such a mode of action only from *Paramēswarā*. Here, it only talks about the karthruthva, that is, the action and its bondage, that happens to the *Jīvā*. In this context, the original book doesn't say anything about the *jnānā* that releases him from this bondage, nor does it talk about the part played by *Īswarā* in this attainment. While writing the *bhāshya* for this, *Āchāryā* does not stop with stating that the *Jīvā* undergoes the life of *samsārā* by doing actions and enjoying their fruits because of *Īswarā's* command. He also says that the same *Īswarā's anugraha* is instrumental in getting this *Jīvā* qualified for attaining *mōkshā* through supreme *jnānā*. He could have stopped right after saying, '*Iswarāth thath anujnaya* karthruthva *bhōkthruthva lakshanasya samsārā siddhi*:' The original doesn't explain beyond this. However, *Āchāryā* didn't seem to want it to end as though it accuses *Īswarā* as being the cause of the bondage of *samsārā*. He thought he must state right away that His *anugraha* is also the reason for the release from it, and he has added, '*thath anugraha hēthukēnaiva cha vijnānēna mōkshā siddhir bhavathum arhathi.*' He has mentioned very clearly, 'Only with the *Īswarā's anugraha* as the cause, does the *Jīvā* obtain the qualification to attain *mōkshā siddhi* through supreme *jnānā*.'

Even so, it is not mandatory to mention this in the *sāsthrās* that are specifically meant for the Adhvaitha *sādhakā*. We just saw that there is ample justification to omit this mention. That is why even *Bhagawān* omits such a mention when He is instructing in an intense *jnāna mārga* in *Gītā*, although this aspect of attaining *mōkshā siddhi* through the grace of *Īswarā* is explicitly expounded in *Gītā* in general. Following this approach, He keeps listing the step-by-step elevation from *indhriya* to mind to *buddhi*, and then to *Āthmā*. Then He concludes the third chapter saying, 'Destroy the foe called desire by controlling the mind and realizing the supreme principle, which is beyond even *buddhi*', as though the *Jīvā* achieves all this on its own.

A Subtle Indication About Īśwarā

Even in this context, there is something that seems to indicate a subtle reference to *Īśwarā*. I am recognizing it myself only as I am talking about this. When He says, '*Āthmā* is higher than *buddhi*,' he uses 'He' ('sa:') instead of 'It' to refer to *Āthmā*. We can interpret the use of 'He' to mean that He is really referring to *Īśwarā*. Using that interpretation, the next *slōkā* should be interpreted as, 'By knowing *Īśwarā*, subdue the mind and destroy desire.' What does it mean to say, 'By knowing *Īśwarā*, subdue the mind?' It could only mean, 'Realize that *Īśwarā* is the tamer of the mind, and achieve that taming by obtaining His grace.' Otherwise, it wouldn't make sense to talk about the *indhriya*, mind, and buddhi, which are *Jīvā's* aspects, and then instead of mentioning *Āthmā* beyond *buddhi*, conclude with just *Īśwarā* and the cessation of the mind. We saw that the mind will have to subside and cease when obtaining the knowledge of *Āthmā*. But to recognize *Īśwarā*, the mind has to be present. Only the *dhvaithic* mind will perceive the *dhvaitic Īśwarā*. Therefore, if we understand the *Gītā* verse to be saying, 'Realizing *Īśwarā*, the mind subsides,' it could only mean that *Īśwarā* grants the cessation of the mind to the one who recognizes Him.

Knowledge of Āthmā is Indeed the Destruction of Desire

So what does it boil down to? Whatever happens to *Īśwarā anugraha*, what the *Jīvā* must do is to try to subdue the mind through the practice of *vairāgya* (or control of desire). Only when it is subdued and stopped can one destroy desire (*kāma*). This is the *kāma* whom *Bhagawān* chided as the one who pushes *Jīvā* forcefully into pāpa*s*, thereby hurling him down into *naraka*; He called this *kāma* the *Mahā pāpi*, demanding a huge treat. He concludes this part by saying that this *kāma* can be destroyed only by taming the *indhriyās*, mind and *buddhi*. That is, only when the *Jīvā* loses his independent *Jīvā*-mode and becomes one with the Adhvaitha *Āthmā*, can the desires cease.

Not only does the desire cease, but since the entire *Jīvā*-mode ceases, the experience of the Adhvaitha *mōkshā* is attained.

By answering 'desire' to Arjuna's question of 'what is the power that pushes one into *pāpa*,' and then by detailing the means by which to subdue this desire, *Bhagawān* opens the way to *mōkshā* itself. Later on, in another place, He reveals this quite explicitly. He clearly states that the very *mōkshā* which is self-realization, or *Brahma nirvāñā*, is attained when released from *kāma* and *krōdha*.

'kāma krōdha vimukthānām yathīnām yatha chethasām |
abithō Brahma nirvāñam varthathē vidhithāthmanām ' (5-26)

He says, 'the ascetics who have broken away from *kāma* and *krōdha*, have subdued the *chitthā*, and have realized *Āthmā*, attain *Brahma nirvāñā* in both.' 'abitho' means 'in both.'

What does He mean, 'in both?'

Mōkshā in this World

Oh, that? It is the same 'two' that become one for the *adhvaithis* who proclaim, 'there is no two.' They are the two concepts of 'Iham' and 'Param.' For all non-*adhvaithis*, *Mōksham* implies only the '*Paralōka*' (the world of 'Param' or the higher world). They get their *mōkshā* in *Vaikūntā* or *Kailāsa* only when they leave 'Iham' (this world), shedding their bodies. This is not the case for *adhvaithis*. An *adhvaithi* realizes that this world is only a game of *Māyā* and his body is not at all what he considers as 'I', while he is still in this very 'Iha' (this) *lōka* (world). Though he appears to be still around in the Iha *lōka* in others' view, he is really transfixed in *Āthmā* and enjoying its bliss. Later, his body will get destroyed in its natural course. That won't matter to him. He will simply remain as *Āthmā*. In answer to the question, 'If the troubles are due to the body, would those troubles go away if we get rid of the body?', we already saw that it is of no use to get rid of the body - the *karmā* has to be got rid of. We saw that to achieve that, the perception of 'I am the body' should be got rid of, and so on. The Self-realized *adhvaithi* experiences the immortal *Āthmā* and enjoys the bliss of *mōkshā* while still remaining in his body. He doesn't perceive himself to be in his body. Such a person who is in the stage of Adhvaitha *mukthi* while appearing to us as being part of this worldly life is called a *jeevan muktha*.

Bhagawān's words provide the stamp of certification to confirm that a person can indeed attain such a state of *Brahma nirvāñā* while he is still in *Iha*, as in the pair of *Iha-Para*. Even within the *vēdhās*, parts of Upanishads and *Purushā* Shukthas mention such people who attain the Immortal principle right in the *Iha*, which is the very field of mortality. Only Adhvaitha is compatible to the concept of attaining such ever-blissful *mōkshā* without having to go to some other world.

Bhagawān talks about how the destruction of desire leads one all the way up to the *adhvaita mōkshā*.

Idea That Preceded Buddha

People glorify Buddha's statement, 'Desire is the cause of misery. If that ceases, one attains *nirvāñā*,' as though it was discovered for the first time only by Buddha. In fact, this concept has been thoroughly ascertained in the *Gīta* by *Bhagawān*. Buddha has discarded the '*Brahmā*,' which denotes wholeness, from the '*Brahma nirvāñā*' mentioned by *Bhagawān*, and kept only the '*nirvāñā*,' which means 'void'. Western historians derive some satisfaction in portraying our spiritual culture, which has been around yugā after *yuga*, as having taken a concrete formal shape only around Buddha's time. Our own researchers pride themselves on being considered their successors. Even these people don't say that *Gītā* came later than Buddha's period.

This concept has been mentioned even in the Upanishads that preceded even the *Gītā*.

A part of the *Thaithirīya* Upanishad called *ānandhavalli* describes the various stages of *ānandhā* (bliss or joy) experienced by a *sādhakā* during his upward spiritual journey. I have already touched upon this a little bit, a while back. These *ānandhā*s are enumerated in the order of their gradual level of increment. It starts with the higher level pleasures that are experienced by humans in their course of life. The next higher *ānandhā* is that of the two kinds of *gāndhārās*. Still higher is the *ānandhā* of the pithrus. Further up is the *ānandhā* of the three kinds of *dēvās*. Next is the *ānandhā* of Indra. Next is that of Brihaspathi. Next is the *ānandhā* of *Prajāpathi*. Higher than that is the *ānandhā* of *Brahmā*. Let us interpret these to denote the *ānandhā*s that are experienced in various intermediate states while transitioning from Dhvaitha to Adhvaitha. In this context, the characteristics of the *sādhakā* who receives such varying gradations of *ānandhā* have been reiterated over and over again. It has specified his defining characteristics as, 'he must be a '*Srōthriya*' and '*akāmahātha*'.' '*Srōthriya*' is one who is born in a highly exalted lineage, has received good *samskaras* (good, proper *sāsthric* rituals), and has attained knowledge through noble education. It is not enough if he simply possesses all these; he should also be '*akāmanatha*'. '*Kāmahātha*' means one who is tormented by desires. When prefixed by an 'a' and mentioned as '*akāmahātha*,' it means just the opposite - that is, one who is not tormented by desires. That is, only the one whose desires have ceased could attain each level of the *ānandhā*s, step by step, and in the end attain the *Brahmānandha*. This has been repeatedly mentioned again and again. Otherwise, he would be unable to leave each *ānandhā*, climb up to higher and higher levels of *ānandhā*, and finally go up to the *Āthmānandha*.

Upanishads describe *Āthma jnānis* as '*Vītharāgās.*' It means, 'those whose desires have been destroyed.' Upanishads talk about the destruction of desires as the way to liberation in several places: 'Immortal principle can't be attained through *karmā*, offspring, or wealth; several people have attained it only through sacrifice.'

Krishnā simply gathered whatever the *rishis* had said and imparted their essence. *Gītā*'s *mangala slōkā* says, 'That shepherd milked the *Gītā*-milk from the Upanishad-cows; He did such milking for the sake of all virtuous people, starting with Arjuna as the calf.'

He preaches in the *Gītā* to subdue the desires and subside within one's Self.

After the Mind Stops

Desire isn't constrained that easily. *Bhagawān* says, '*Kāmarūpam dhurasa tham*' - '*dhurasatham*' means 'that which doesn't get constrained.' He seems to give Arjuna a pat on the back, saying, 'However, you are a *Mahābāhu.*' '*Mahābāhu*' means 'broad-shouldered.' If we consider the Kaurava-Pandava war as an allegorical narration of the war between evil and good - or as a dēvā-*asūra* war mentioned in the beginning - the strength of the shoulder denoted by 'broad shoulder' stands for nothing but the *sādhakā's* strength of determination and commitment. In this context, the strength of the shoulders simply means remaining steadfast in the incessant practice of holding the mind steady, without letting it bolt and scatter away again and again, analogous to the determined attempt to climb up a slick slide no matter how many times we slip.

After the mind stops, *Āthmā* alone will start to shine. It is only through the mind that we receive all these worldly experiences, isn't it? All these experiences will vanish when the mind subsides. All our troubles and fears in our worldly life are only for these experiences, right? All of these will simply vanish. Since the demon of desire, which is the one that hurled us into all things, is generated in the mind, when the mind stops, this demon will also subside. After that, only supreme peace will prevail. It will be simply the bliss of freedom severed from all the ties of the body, *indhriya*, mind, *buddhi*, *karmā*, relations, possessions, *samsārā* and so on. This is what is experienced in the state of *samādhi*.

Realization of Āthmā is the True Knowledge

If such an *ānandhā* exists, there should also be some one to experience it. But if he experiences it as some one different from this *ānandhā*, that will bring in Dhvaitha. When Dhvaitha appears, so does fear. Then how can there be *ānandhā*? Therefore, this person himself has to be *ānandhā-swarupi* (bliss personified).

This some one is called *Āthmā*. *Āthmā* is the 'I.'

So far, we have been thinking of the mind as 'I.' We thought of its experiences as our own experiences. While trying to receive these experiences, we acquired miseries instead of *ānandhā*, as if smearing ourselves with mud while trying to take a bath. The biggest grief here is, in fact, the perception of the unreal as the real while remaining ignorant of the real.

It was incorrect to have thought of the mind as 'I,' or our true *swarūpa*, right? Wasn't it a falsehood? There is also a state of the mind where it becomes inactive and absent. In deep sleep, under anesthesia, and in *Samādhi*, the mind does become inactive. Even at that time, 'we' or *Āthmā*, which is the 'I,' exists. So we are certain that it was wrong or false to have thought of the mind as us. The only true knowledge is realizing *Āthmā* or the *Āthma jnānā*.

After realizing that the mind, which we had thought of as 'I' so far, is unreal, obviously we have to realize *Āthmā*, the real 'I.'

We learn all kinds of things such as history, geography, atomic science, electronics, etc. The whole purpose of the human birth is to learn various kinds of truths. So we learn several arts and sciences. We do our search and research using our brain to create gadgets that will give us pleasure. However, in the end, we see something that is actually putting us, who think of ourselves as very smart, to shame and turning all our smartness into idiocy. That is, the mind with which we have been searching for the truth, the mind for whose satisfaction we did the searching, the mind through which we perceived these as truth, that mind itself appears not to be real. We see that the mind is not the real 'I.' (By mind, I mean the *anthakaraṅa,* which includes *buddhi* also). Even our great searches and researches that end up increasing the production of gadgets for our pleasure appear silly now, because the pleasure that we are talking about is only the pleasure of the mind. That we spend so much effort to produce these gadgets only for the pleasure of something that is not the true 'I' is not very smart, is it? Without understanding the real person and not doing what he needs, and mistaking a disguised person for the real one and going through so much trouble, constantly doing something to cater to this disguised person's indulgences is a matter of great grief, isn't it? Is all this effort for fostering falsehood? Oh, how much have we been deceived! Shouldn't we strive for the true knowledge at least from now on?

This is what I told some one who had asked me, 'Why should I realize *Āthmā*?' Viewing him with our worldly outlook, we have to admit that he was of course a lucky person. He was living in comfort. He didn't have any gnawing troubles. Therefore, he asked, 'You are conducting all these discourses on Adhvaitham, *Āthma Sānthi* (peace), and so on. You claim that only these can bring joy, and that otherwise we will be subject to the miseries of the world. But I don't really perceive the world as all that miserable. Life seems to be going smoothly. So what is the problem with letting everything be the same and remaining in this course of life? Why are you asking us to invite all these unnecessary hardships of controlling the tongue, controlling the mind, and so on?' He asked the same thing couched in a more subtle manner.

This is what I told him then. I said, 'Let us assume that you are attending to some one with hospitality and care. You are doing this with the understanding that you are deriving some comforts from him. You find out later that he is not the person that you thought he was when you attended to him - instead, he was a phony who came in the guise of the real person. You also find out that the joy that he provides isn't really as lasting as you think. How miserable would you feel then? Pampering the *Māyā*-guised mind, thinking that it is our real 'I', and mistaking the comforts that it gives for the *Āthmānandha* are akin to this.'

Drawback of Living Through the Mind

It is only through the experiences of the mind that we claim to be happy. But then, shouldn't we clarify whether this mind that experiences the happiness is really ourselves? We claim that all the greatness of the human race lies in discovering the truths of various things after thorough research and investigation. We take pride in understanding the principles of the world, from an atom all the way up to a galaxy, day after day. Who is this 'we' that understands all these things? Shouldn't we do our research on this and find out? Doesn't boasting about the truths discovered through science while we don't understand our own true state make it a mockery? If you want to find out the truth of all truths and knowledge of all knowledge, you must study the *Āthmā sāsthrā*.

Even the majority of us, who are not ready for a serious study of *Āthma śāsthrās,* shouldn't be toiling constantly for the sake of this false mind while totally forgetting the true *Āthmā.* If we do that, we will just make a fool of ourselves. That is why, whatever our inclination is, we must remind ourselves at least for five or ten minutes every day, 'There exists a great, peaceful state known as *Āthmā* that renders all our actions, thoughts, and the world a total falsehood.' At least for those five or ten minutes, we should just be sitting down peacefully.

The worldly life that one goes through by means of the mind's experiences might be quite happy and comfortable up until now. That doesn't mean we can be complacent and call it quite sufficient. That happiness could vanish tomorrow. Some kind of disease could afflict us. Our possessions could be stolen. Our near and dear ones could pass away. Anything could happen any time that could cause our mind to experience desire, anger, fear, sorrow, or madness.

Mind needs to disappear, not Body

Therefore, it is possible to stay in peace and comfort forever, instead of being tugged by various affiliations, only if we stand fast in the *Āthma sathya*, dispelling the illusory mind. Only when that real 'I' is attained will the feeling of 'I am the body' disappear. At that stage, even if the body is afflicted with diseases, it won't affect us in any way.

I already talked about people who commit suicide thinking, 'All these troubles are only because of the body, so let me get rid of this body.' Even if this body goes, the life will take on various other bodies such as the ghost body, followed by another birth with another physical body, and so on. I had mentioned that it would again buy trouble from these bodies as well. So I said death is not a solution to get rid of problems. What is the solution? I said that it is not the body, but only the attachment to the body with its associated sense of 'I,' that should disappear. The ignorance that identifies this body as 'I' should be dispelled. That is still not sufficient. Identifying the mind as 'I' should also disappear. After ceasing to associate the body with 'I', if we only move on to associating the mind with 'I,' it will also be considering a falsehood the truth. The very thought of 'I' should go. If thought is there, it brings in two things: the mind that does the thinking and the 'I' that is thought about. Such duality is a cause for fear. The thought should go, and the thinking mind should go; we should only remain as the 'I.' That is Self-Realization. That is our true state.

Views Pertaining to Birth and Liberation

You might ask how the *Jīvā bhāvā*, the individual mind and the body came to be associated with that true 'I.' If my answer to this question is that it is only *Āthmā* (the true 'I'), coupled with *Māyā*, that appears as a *Jīvā* with a mind and a body, a further question arises as to why *Āthmā* should couple with *Māyā* in the first place. No convincing answer to this question comes to mind. Why should Brahmam, which is a blissful whole just remaining by Itself, perform this *Māyā* and become an incomplete entity? If you ask this question, we are only able to say, 'It is some līlā (play) that is incomprehensible to us.' We are unable to address it beyond that. This is a hide-and-seek game that Brahmam plays, first reducing its completeness to incompleteness and then searching for Itself to complete it again. Why should Brahman play such a game? I don't know the answer.

'Isn't a game something that doesn't have any particular reason for being played? The activity that doesn't have rights, wrongs, and arguments is called play, isn't it?' We make statements such as, 'I just said it light-heartedly, as a game,' 'Don't take it so seriously, leave it as just a game,' and so on, only in that sense of the term, don't we? If such a reasonless game or līlā appears in Brahmam, the question 'What is the reason for it?' is meaningless, isn't it? With just this one argument, we are silenced.

We can explain away this body that we have acquired in this birth as a result of the *karmā* from the previous birth. Tracing this to each such preceding birth, reaching all the way to the very first birth, we could ask how that body came up. It couldn't have been due to *karmā*. Since in that case, there should have been a birth and body prior to that for doing such *karmā*, which would mean that it wasn't the first birth.

Jīvā has *janmā* (birth). If it just stayed in the states where there wass no *janmā*, there would have been only one *Āthmā*. *Āthmā* doesn't have *janmā*. Nevertheless, it has become a *Jīvā*, taking *janmā*.

Brahma Sūthra contains the following statements that contradict each other. First, it says, '*Janmā* occurs from Brahmam.' (1-1-2) Later on, it also says, '*Janmā* is only a pretension created by the body, not a reality; *Āthmā* stays eternal without being created.' (2-3-16,17) The *dhvaithis* who believe in several *Jīvāthmās* wouldn't be able to solve this contradiction. If they interpret, '*Āthmā* stays eternal without being created' to denote *Jīvāthmā*, they can't accept the statement that its *janmā* occurs from Brahmam. For something that is eternal and not created, how can its *janmā* occur from something else? In Adhvaitha, we call something *Jīvāthmā* only for the practicalities of worldly affairs. We really don't consider two separate entities as *Jīvāthmā* and *Paramāthmā* or several such *Jīvāthmās* either. Our doctrine is that there is only one single *Āthmā*. Brahma Sūthra refers to this same *Āthmā* as Brahmam and then states that it is an eternal entity that has never been created. We accept this statement as such. An appearance of the *jagath* and several

Jīvāthmās has occurred in this single *Āthmā*. Since such an appearance of *Jīvā* emanated from this, we are also able to accept the statement that *janmā* is only from Brahman, which is the same as *Āthmā*. The only aspect that we have a problem with is 'Why, when, and for what reason should it happen like this, followed by the numerous *janmās* as a result of the accumulated *karmās*?' This is what we are not able to understand.

If we think about these puzzles, our heads start to spin. If we ask how this thing called *Jīvā* got created and where it was existing before it took the first *janmā*, they say, 'Don't ask how *Jīvā* got created. It is never created; it is none other than the eternal principle of what is called *Paramāthmā*.' Put another way, they say that *Māyā* has created the mode of *Jīvā* in *Āthmā*. If so, when did this *Māyā* get created? If we ask this question, they say, ''When' is a wrong question to ask concerning *Māyā* in the first place, because 'when' denotes time. It is only due to *Māyā* that the aspect of time has been imposed upon *Āthmā*, which actually transcends time. When the concept of time itself is created by *Māyā*, what does it mean to ask when *Māyā* got created?' They completely shut our mouths with this argument.

What they say does have something that provides a little consolation. Whether *Jīvā* is *anādhi* (without beginning) or *Māyā* is *anādhi*, whatever the case may be, both of them can only be *anādhi*, but not *anantham* (endless). So we understand that they do have an end. *Ādhi* and *antham* are two concepts. *Ādhi* is 'beginning' and *antham* is 'ending'. With no *Ādhiantham*, the one that remains *anādhi* and *anantham* is *Paramāthman* alone. *Māyā* has *antham*. As soon as *jnānā* is attained, it vanishes, totally losing its appearance. At that time, *Jīvāthmā* will also reach its *antham* in *Paramāthmā* and become one with it. After that, there is no *janmā*, no body, no troubles, and no desire, fear, etc. that result from the Dhvaitha.

The *dhvaithis* subscribe to the view that the *Jīvāthmā*, which has its own individual existence that is *anādhi*, is also *anantha*. They claim that the ultimate state of *mōkshā* is nothing but experiencing the bliss in the presence of *Īśwarā*, remaining forever as *Jīvāthmā*. They say that it is the end for all the processes of birth-death, another body, *samsārā*, etc. Making a slight modification to this Dhvaitham, they bring in another philosophy called *viśishtādhvaitham* that says that these *Jīvāthmās* realize the *Īśwarā* as their indweller (*antharyāmi*), and hence they also enjoy the bliss and *jnānā* of *Īśwarā* without all the afflictions of a *Jīvā*. A few others go even further up into Adhvaitha. They don't simply stop at the level of *Antharyāmi*. They compare the status of the *Jīvāthmās* in *mōkshā* in the presence of *Īśwarā* to the presence of stars under the brightness of the sun. While the sun is shining, can you see the stars, even a little bit? You don't, right? Does it mean that those stars have been destroyed? That is not true, either. Similarly, under the brilliance of the principle of *Paramāthmā*, the principle of *Jīvāthmā* loses its individual luster and lies immersed in that brightness. The people who make this claim that has an *adhvaithic* slant are the same ones who say the three primary aspects exist even in *mukthi*). These three aspects are the *paśu* (*Jīvāthmā*), *pathi* (*Paramāthmā*) and *pāśām* (*jagath*). Whatever be the kind of relationship with *Paramāthman* that exists in *mōkshā*, however much the various schools of philosophy differ from each other on this, they are all in unison when they say that after reaching this state, there is no more *samsārā*, and no more *janmā*.

Effort Towards the Release is What is Necessary

We need not fret over the fact that no school of philosophy gives a satisfactory answer to the question of how the independent *Āthmā* got entangled in *samsārā*. Nor do we have to get all muddled up, pondering over the absence of explanations for how *Āthmā* became subjected to the control of *Māyā* in the *advaitha śāsthrās*, which do point to *Māyā* as the cause of *samsārā*.

This is because no one falls into a trap or a net knowingly. The same way, we have somehow fallen into this net of *Māyā jāla*. '*Jāla*' means net. It also means magic - that is why we call magic a 'Jāla Viddhai.' Magic is indeed false, but it appears real. That is why magic shows are conducted, and we go watch them. We pay money to watch and be entertained.

The very idea of *Āthmā* coming under the control of *Māyā* is itself a *Māyā* magic. No matter how emphatically we declare, 'It is not real; *Āthmā* can never be bound,' we go through so much suffering in the practical reality, don't we? While the magic that we watch for a little while gives us happiness, this magic that we have been experiencing through so many cycles of life yields only grief. So all we can and need to do is begin our efforts to get out of it. If we found ourselves fallen into a trap, would we be researching how we ended up falling there? We would only be trying to see how quickly we could escape and by what means we could escape, won't we? Similarly, without racking our brains conducting all kinds of research on the questions, 'How did this body come about? How did *jnānā* happen? How did *samsārā* occur? How did the bondage of *Māyā* happen?' and so on, we must instead start the attempt to get out of these. Even if we do find out the answers to these questions, of what use is it?

Samsāra Does Have an End: Unanimous Opinion

Philosophers from all schools concur on one point: that *samsārā* has *antham* (end), whether or not *Jīvā* has. That is all we need. We feel that it is more than enough if *samsārā*, the reason for all our troubles, goes away. Even after that, we would prefer not to become just a jada, with no awareness of anything whatsoever. One school talks about becoming one with *Paramāthmā* and assuming the chaithanya *swarūpa,* which is the very opposite of a jada. Another one talks about the state of *ānandhā*, enjoying the love of that *Paramāthmā*. So we see that this isn't the state of jada either, but a state that possesses quite a bit of chaithanya. Similarly, the third school also talks about being immersed in the brilliance of chaithanya.

Whatever the end, the beginning is the effort to start doing away with the bondage of *samsārā*. All philosophers agree on this. This beginning is nothing but removing the bond of *samsārā* accumulated through *pāpa karmās* by performing good *karmās* and removing the thoughts of *pāpa*, which pushed us into these *karmās*, by doing *Īswara bhakthi.*

This is the same beginning for Adhvaitha *sādhanā* also.

Adhvaitham Accepts Stages of Dhvaitham

There need be no confusion about this point. We don't need to be perplexed and wonder even slightly, 'Aren't we all *adhvaithis*? Don't we hail from that tradition? At least, don't we strongly believe that that is the true principle? Don't we desire to have that experience materialized? Is it then becoming of us to be involved in all these actions full of *dhvaithic* slant (observance of *sāsthric* injunctions) and the *bhakthi upāsanās*?' Even the very establisher of the *adhvaitha* philosophy, our *Bhagavadpādhā*, has himself enjoined only this route. After having remained in Dhvaitha for so long, committing all these wrongs, how would it be possible to suddenly shift to Adhvaitha now? Only if we remove the wrongs committed by the same Dhvaitha can we then perform the *adhvaithic sādhanā*. Therefore, this is what *Āchāryā* tells us to do in the present state that we are in. He completely accepts Dhvaitham at this stage and asks us, too, to accept it completely and boldly without any reservation. Later on, after getting more and more conditioned, he asks us to fight it valiantly, conquer it, and then move on to Adhvaitha.

Unlike the followers of other schools who absolutely reject Adhvaitha, *adhvaithis* don't refuse to accept the other philosophies. *Āchāryā* accepts very well that before reaching the state of Adhvaitha, several stages of Dhvaitha*s* do exist.

When writing the *bhāshya* for a very *adhvaithic* manthra in *Bruhadhārañyaka* Upanishad (5-1-1) that says, 'That too is whole, and this too is whole,' *Āchāryā* says, '*na cha* Dhvaithasya *anruthathva buddhi: prathamamēva kasya chith syāth.*' This means, 'No one is capable of knowing that the Dhvaitha prapancha (world) is all false right from the beginning.'

The first part of the second chapter in the Brahma Sūthra thoroughly analyzes the question of how *jagath* came into being from Brahman. There are several opinions regarding this: though Brahman is the cause for the *jagath*, did it make the *jagath* with any other materials, did it just transform into *jagath* by Itself, or does it just simply appear to be the *jagath*? If it made the *jagath* with any other materials, where did they come from? If they did come from somewhere else, then the first premise of Brahman being the cause of *jagath* becomes erroneous. If any other basic material exists besides Brahman, then this Brahman is not Brahman at all! It also isn't correct that Brahman just transformed into *jagath*, as the milk turns into yogurt (curd). The defining characteristic of Brahman is that it remains unchanged in its innate form. It doesn't fit the definition if it changes into something else. Besides, if it had changed into *jagath* itself, then it couldn't also have a separate existence as Brahmam. So that would imply that after the creation of *jagath*, Brahman was no more. So none of these opinions seem to be correct. *Āchāryā* has established that Brahman appears simply to be the *jagath*; it hasn't made an actual creation with some external material, nor has it transformed itself into anything. Becoming something different called '*pariñāmam*' is entirely different from what *Āchāryā* describes as appearing to be something different. This is called 'vivartham.' *Pariṅāmam* denotes an actual change in the form. The way in which a worm turns into a moth is called *pariṅāmam*. After this process, does the worm exist? No. But if the same worm appears to be some piece of rubber, then does it go through any real change? It remains a worm. At the same time, it also appears to be a piece of rubber. Similarly, Brahmam, with no change to itself, remains in its original form without any movements within this form. While the Brahmam still remains like that, *Māyā* creates the appearance of the *jagath*. This is what *Āchāryā* explains. This example, called the *rajju-sarpa nyāsam*, or the appearance of a snake on a rope, is mentioned quite frequently in *adhvaithic* books.

Āchāryā establishes this fundamental principle of Adhvaitham to explain the fourteenth *Sūthra* in *Brahma Sūthra*, which says 'thathananyathva - *mārampaṅa* - *ṡapthāthibhya*.' While doing this, showing his regard to those who have opinions that differ from this, he says that we must accept the dhvaithic opinions in stages prior to Adhvaitha. He states very clearly, 'The events of a dream appear very real as long as we are in the dreaming state and we realize that they were false only after waking up. Similarly, before the awakening of the *jnānā* that Paramāthmā Itself is *Jīvāthmā,* we must accept that all the occurrences of the dhvaithic *samsārā* are compatible to the principle of sathya (truth).' – *'Sarva vyavāhārānāmēva prāk Brahmāth mathā vijnānāth Sathyath vōpapaththē: svapna vyavahārasya prāk prabōdhanāth.'*

We must accept this as such. As *Āchāryā* himself has ordained, we must observe all the prescribed *karmās* completely and do *bhakthi upāsanā*. Only after that should we move on to Self-inquiry in order to make the mind cease. Only then can we attain the one and only principle that ever remains in its innate form. You don't need to hesitate, thinking, 'Aren't we the ones who accept Adhvaitham? Can we really do these *dhvaithic* actions? Wouldn't the *dhvaithis* laugh at us, saying, 'After all this talk about Adhvaitha, aren't they eventually doing the same *karmā* and *bhakthi* as we do?'' If our ultimate goal is *sathya*, we have to be prepared for all this. We must be prepared for total humility. We must get rid of all attachments, including the attachment to our doctrine. This is the path laid out by *Āchāryā*.

We should let go of the stubborn attachment to the pure philosophy. What we call stubbornness is this holding on to one's own argument with an unreasonable hard-headedness. We can't make any progress if we keep holding on to the arguments of the philosophy at the debate level but shy away from trying to follow it from the basic fundamentals to grasp the essence of this philosophy through practical adherence.

When *Āchāryā* was about to conclude his *avathara* and shed his body, *bhakthās* approached him and requested, 'Kindly bless us by condensing your numerous instructions and providing us with their filtered essence.' He gave this condensed instruction in five *slōkās*. They say how an ordinary *Jīvā* just like ourselves should start from the basic fundamental level and gradually progress to the *adhyāthma sādhanā*. This is called '*upadēsā panchakam*' or '*sōpāna panchakam'*. The very first line in it contains his *upadēsā*, which says, 'Recite the *Vēdhās* every day and meticulously observe all the *karmās* prescribed in it.' He says, 'Do this for *Īswarā's* gratification, not your own.' Then, he adds, '*bhagavatho bhakthir dhridhādhīyathām'* - 'Worship *Bhagawān* with strong *bhakthi*.'

If we are truly the *sishyās* (disciples) of *Āchāryā*, we must act according to his *upadēsā*, with which he had blessed us at the conclusion of his life-journey. That is, starting with performing *karmā* and *bhakthi*, and only after convincing ourselves firmly that our *chitthā* has become purified and it has attained the ability to remain firmly on one thing without becoming scattered, we should stop *karmā* and *bhakthi* and become intensely involved in self-inquiry. It is true that *adhvaithic* goals shouldn't be forgotton, even at the beginning. Every day, for a short while, we must think, 'This is all *Māyā*, all Dhvaitha; *Āthmā* is the only reality; it is the entity that has no action, and it exists in supreme peace.' We have to remain with that feeling of 'I am indeed like that' at least for a short while. But it is possible for that feeling to become a reality only if *karmā* and *bhakthi* are performed. As this feeling becomes more and more intense, they will disappear on their own. We shouldn't leave them at the beginning itself. We should transition to Adhvaitham through Dhvaitham. We should look for a way to destroy *karmā* through the very *karmānushtānā* (observance of *karmā*) performed by the body. Similarly, we should condition ourselves to destroy the mind through the *bhakthi* performed by this very same mind.

Philosophers from other schools do not accept Adhvaitha. But it is no wonder that *adhvaithis* accept the Dhvaitha propounded by them as the steps that lift us up to Adhvaitha. For example, the people who live on the ground floor of a house may not be aware of the stories above them, but those who live upstairs couldn't be unaware of the stories that are below. People downstairs might ask, 'Is there really an upper story to this house?' but those upstairs would never ask doubtfully, 'Is there really a floor below?' Some one who travels to Chidambaram from here (*Kumbakōṇam*) may not be aware of Madras, but the one who goes to Madras will have to go through Chidambaram. The one who climbs to the top of a hill must go from the base. Therefore, he would admit that the lower parts of the region of the hill do exist. Those who climbed only to a certain level wouldn't be able to see the top. If that were hidden from their vision, they might even think that there was no higher peak than where they were. I don't really need to give these kinds of examples. I just mentioned them. Since Adhvaitha supports and embraces all other philosophies, giving these kinds of explanations is itself incompatible with its spirit.

Truth and Bliss Only in Adhvaitham

What need to be done are *karmā* and *bhakthi*. However, from the very beginning, a thread of contemplation on *Āthmā* must remain unbroken. We shouldn't let ourselves forget the great principle of Adhvaitha. *Karmā* and *bhakthi* are only for that purpose. *Karmā* is not for *karmā* alone, nor is *bhakthi* for *bhakthi* alone. We should always be aware that the end is still Adhvaitha and all these *dhvaithic* actions are only the means. Simply existing as Adhvaitha is the unchanging state of the truth. Everything else involves some change or the other. A change means not remaining firmly fixed in one true state. So no matter how great Dhvaitham is and however many good aspects it has, if your aim is to discover the truth and simply remain as that truth, you must leave this Dhvaitha and move on to the Adhvaitha *jnānā*. If we are not in the state of *sathya*, we must be in *asathya*, doesn't it? Is that really how we should be?

Thus, in addition to just remaining as *sathya*, true bliss is attained only in Adhvaitha. This is how I answered the one who was quite comfortably placed in life and posed the question, 'What is Adhvaitham for?' This comfortable life, which is the fruit of past puṇya *karmās* and which in reality gives comfort only to the mind, might desert us at any time. The mind is attached only to the body and the possessions. Tomorrow, any of the following could happen. We might suffer a fracture in our limbs or be stung by a scorpion. Some one might forge our signature and rob our savings from the bank. *Yamā* might take away some of our near and dear ones. If any such thing happened, we would lose all our happiness and drop down in grief and dejection. Or even if no such external event occurred to affect our mind, we might just entertain some bizarre thoughts, and brood and feel ashamed of ourselves, wondering, 'How could I think like that?' Any of these could happen at any minute.

Therefore, our ultimate goal must be to attain the comfort of Adhvaitha by becoming one with *Āthmā*. Towards this goal, we must somehow earn the appropriate qualifications, and sometime after that, we must give up all the experiences of *dhvaithic* comforts. These comforts pertain only to the mind. Therefore, we must focus all our attention not only towards *Āthmā*, but also on our ultimate goal of merging with this *Āthmā*n, thus attaining the *adhvaithic* comfort.

Since the real 'I' would begin to be felt only after attaining *Āthmā*, we could then lose the attachment to the body and become immune to the afflictions that come upon this body. The ignorance of identifying people and possessions as one's own would be dispelled. Therefore, losing them in a theft, or losing the near and dear ones when they passed, would not cause any hardship. We could be totally blissful as all the feelings of desire, anger, fear, sorrow and so on, which arise only towards another entity, recede and become buried in the depth of the nether regions.

Fear is One of Desire's Many Untoward Results

Why is fear also termed as originating from desire? We are afraid of ghosts and devils, storms and rains, ruffians, our boss, etc. Is desire really the cause of these fears?

Of course desire is the cause. Our desire for the body, as our 'I,' makes us fear the storm, since we worry about the harm that could result from it. Our desire for the *chitthā*, as our 'I,' makes us fear ghosts and devils, since we worry that they might possess it and control it. The desire for our body and our possessions makes us fear ruffians, since we worry that they might beat up the body or rob the possessions of this false 'I'. The mind entertains a very important sense of 'mine' called its 'dignity' or 'honor'. The desire for this dignity makes us fear our boss, since we worry that our boss might ask us some humiliating question or suspend us, damaging our honor. Thus, fear arises only due to the worry that some harm is going to befall a thing that it erroneously identifies as our own. Earlier, I said that desire is indeed the root cause of anger, greed, infatuation, pride, and jealousy. Now we learn that it is also the cause of sorrow and fear. If the desired object is not obtained, or if it is lost when we have already obtained it, sorrow prevails.

Towards what does desire arise in the mind? - Only towards something that is different from itself (the mind). The fear, sorrow, and anger that arise when encountering an obstacle to this desire is also due to something that is different from itself.

Dhvaitham That Denotes Many Things

Adhvaitha is something that remains as a single entity, having no second. The existence of several entities instead of just one is Dhvaitha. To be accurate, the term 'Dhvaitha' means 'two' or 'duality' - it doesn't mean 'many'. The Dhvaitha philosophy is as follows: There is one *Paramāthmā* and then there is another *Jīvāthmā* that is different from *Paramāthmā*; existence of two such entities is really the *sathya* (or truth). Here, we consider things with respect to *Jīvāthmā* and only *Jīvāthmā*. As far as he is concerned, and as long as he thinks that *Jīvāthmā* is nothing but the set of body, *indhriyās*, and *Anthahkarańa*, there are many external entities that are within the realm of his experience. It is not just that 'he is one and there is another one external to himself'. Instead, it is that 'he is one and there are many, external to himself'. All these external entities together, forming a set, is generally spoken of as the Dhvaitha *prapancha* (world). Though there are many things, far beyond two, and numerous animate and inanimate (*chēthana* and *achēthana*) things, there is only one *Jīvāthmā*. Considering all the others as a set that is second to him, the *jagath* has come to be called Dhvaitha *prapancha*.

Mind Will not be Alone

This dhvaitha cannot be escaped as long as the mind is perceived in general, as the person, or stated formally, when the set of body, *indhriya,* and *Anthahkaraṇa* is perceived as the *Jīvāthmā*. The word '*manushya*' (or man) is derived from the word '*manas*' (mind). 'Man' means 'to think'. Because he possesses the highest thinking power among all living beings, he is called '*manushya*'. However, we just found out that this very thinking power seems to be the source of all his troubles, *janmā*, *karmā*, and *samsārā*. In addition, we found out that *Āthmā* is the underlying support for this power of thinking, but not something that is within the mind's grasp, as no thoughts arise in *Āthmā*. We also came to know that this *Āthmā* is the true innate form of a *Jīvā*.

When we consider that the mind is capable of thinking on its own without help from anything else, we might wonder why it cannot also be like *Āthmā*, without the touch of the Dhvaitha *prapancha*. Aren't all troubles due to external entities? It is only for possessing an external thing that we have to try so hard, running around like dogs. Then we worry about whether this external entity will stay around or not. It could disappear by itself, or some one else could grab it away. Thinking about this, we get angry, sad, and afraid. On the other hand, if the mind simply carried on its own thinking process, all these troubles wouldn't arise, would they? Since the mind has the capability to think directly, why can't it carry on its own business by itself and avoid depending on anything that might cause untoward results?

Well, this is where all the mischief of *Māyā* comes in. That is -

The mind just doesn't know how to exist by itself. When it can finally remain by itself, this mind itself will disappear. Only *Āthmā* will shine after that. The *Māyā* of *Paramēswarā* has designed this mind in such a peculiar way.

Granted that the mind thinks independently, what does it actually think about? It is only capable of thinking about something else all the time. The mind just doesn't know how not to think about something else. In this play of *Māyā*, this is something that the mind is simply incapable of. It is true that various kinds of thoughts emanate only from the mind. But if you think about it, you will see that every one of such thoughts is only about something else. Only thoughts about things that are foreign to the mind arise in it.

The mind not only thinks but also feels. Such feelings or experiences are also about things that are foreign to it. Several feelings such as anger, happiness, fear, sorrow, etc. do arise in the mind. Yet they arise only concerning its external experiences. Just as we serve ourselves rice using a spatula, pickles using a spoon, and *ābhōsana thīrtha* (sanctified water) using a *uddharini*, the mind consumes the external entities by serving itself using the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin. Though the entity that is enjoying these things is the mind, it seems to be in need of the *indhriyās* as its tools. And then, it also needs many external objects that are external even to the *indhriyās*, such as the scenes that the eyes see, songs that the ears hear, scents that the nose smells, the delicious pickle that the tongue tastes, and the mattress that the skin rolls on.

Even when it is musing on something and enjoying itself on its own instead of driving the *indhriyās*, it has to think only about something else and is not able to think about itself and derive fulfillment from that experience. The mind creates stories, and it composes poems. Yet they are only about different characters, natural scenery, and motifs. It is ironic that even though it is really the mind that experiences the *lakhs* and *lakhs* of sorrows and happiness obtained through the *Indhriyās*, it is unable to get even a single one of the experiences from itself - it is only able to get those experiences from external objects.

If it attempts to examine itself in an isolated context, the mind will realize that it does not have its own entity. It is left only with its happiness, its grief, its likes, its dislikes, its thoughts, its experiences, etc. They are all associated with the mind. Because it is only an association, it follows that they are not the mind itself.

Let's take some one called *Rāmā*. The following entities have a relationship or an association with this person called *Rāmā*: *Rāmā* has a house; he has land; he has a wife and children; he has a brain; he has a position. All of these, house, land, wife, children, brain, and position, are different, and he is different. Even in the absence of all these things, the person called *Rāmā* does exist. Similar unassociated existence seems to be impossible for the mind. The mind is simply not able to exist without thinking or experiencing something. Furthermore, these thoughts and experiences seem to be associated only with some foreign entity. That is, if there is such a thing as a mind, it can only be involved in Dhvaitha.

Āthmā is the only Stand Alone Entity

The mind can never be isolated by itself and observed. Therefore, 'focusing the mind and making it stand fast in itself' doesn't mean 'placing it in the mind which doesn't have its own form'. Instead it means, 'placing it squarely on *Āthmā*, the true 'I', the one that is completely fulfilled in itself, the one that has no external connections, not even to this mind.' *Āthmā*, which transcends the mind, cannot be experienced by the mind. *Āthmā* is the one and only one that can experience itself. The nature of

Āthmā and the nature of the mind are entirely opposite to each other. The mind doesn't know itself; it only knows things that are different from itself. *Āthmā*, on the other had, knows only itself; it knows no other entity. The mind is Dhvaitham; *Āthmā* is Adhvaitham.

Yet, there is no mind without *Āthmā*. When *Āthmā* is the very 'I', the true form of some one, would it then be possible for that *Jīvā* to posses anything that is not associated with this 'I'? Put another way, if some one doesn't even have an 'I', how can he then posses an entity called the mind? Adhvaitha *śāsthrā* mentions this as follows: It is the same *Āthmā* that has become the mind due to *Māyā*. That is, it has become a *Jīvā*, who thinks of his mind as 'I'. It adds that this one single *Āthmā* has become numerous such jīvās.

Example of Electricity

Here science comes to the aid of *adhyāthma śāsthrā* and provides an example. It is an oft-repeated analogy. That is, the same electricity manifests itself as one hundred watts, sixty watts, and colors of green and red, in various different bulbs, sound in the tape recorder, coolness in the air conditioner, heat in the heater, etc. None of this would function without the electricity. Yet, is it really appropriate to conclude that electricity is so many watts, is such and such a color, plays a particular song, is this hot, or this cold, based on the above observations? While not being any of these, and yet making each one of these things function in a specific manner, the same electrical energy causes several functions in several different forms. Similarly, the same *Āthmā* is carrying out various actions by creating various life forms consisting of various tendencies, power, etc. However, is the defining characteristic of *Āthmā* any of these tendencies, power, skills, or actions? Of course not! To say that any of them is its characteristic is only akin to saying that electricity is green in color, or saying that electricity has a certain pitch after listening to a tape recorder.

Electricity is not many; there is only one electricity. It is Adhvaitham! The same electricity performs various tasks in so many objects and becomes a cause of Dhvaitha. Similarly, the single *Āthmā* has become the cause of the affairs of all the *Jīvā* and jada society through the power of *Māyā*. That is, it is the cause of the drama of the entire universe.

Paramāthmā - Jīvāthmās

If the conclusion is that only *Āthmā* gives the appearance of the existence of everything through *Māyā*, then it leads to the premise that *Jīvāthmā* and *Paramāthmā* couldn't be two separate entities. Just as all other illusory appearances, the entity called *Jīvā* is also another one of those appearances of *Āthmā*. Though the *jīvās* are many, each one doesn't have its own individual *Āthmā*. Instead, the same *Āthmā* is the true form of all these *jīvās*.

Consider a single *Jīvā*. Starting from the hair on his head down to his toe nails, he has so many parts, each performing its own various tasks. He has several different organs of actions and organs of knowledge, each with its own functions. He has even more parts such as flesh, fat, bones, blood, lungs, heart, intestines, *Chitthā*, *buddhi*, mind, ego (*ahankārā*), and so on. For all these parts, there is only one life, isn't it? If that life leaves, all these other parts go out too. Of all these things that I mentioned before, the *chitthā, buddhi*, mind and ego leave only a particular body when the life leaves. They do reach another body. All the others, the parts that came together in a body to perform various tasks, get completely destroyed after the end of life. Therefore, we understand that the root of all these Dhvaitha*s* is that single life.

Similarly, the root of all these *jīvās*, who appear as the numerous lives is only that one single *Āthmā*. There are not many

Āthmās called *Jīvāthmās*. *Āthmā* is only one. The one called *Paramāthmā* is the same thing too.

Pramāthmā Cause of Universal Antharyāmi

Nevertheless, in common practice, two different entities called *Paramāthmā* and *Jīvāthmā* have been in vogue for a long time. This classification has evolved based on the practical, worldly drama.

What do we observe in this world? *Prakruthi* (Nature) and the jada *lōka* (inanimate world) function in various ways. The planets revolve around the sun. The moon revolves around the earth. These movements cause the days and nights, *ayanas* (sun's apparent annual motion either northward or southward), seasonal wind, etc. Plants grow from the sun's energy. All these in combination transform the world to be suitable for the *jīvās* to conduct their life. Within the humans and other life forms, the males and females couple together and procreate. They perform so many other functions using their brain and strength. Each one has their own strength and brain-power. Each one's residual *karmā* from previous births hold on to them in *janmā* after *janmā* and make them reap their fruits. So many such affairs link together in some order and seem to have created the practical worldly life. Therefore, it seems to imply the existence of some one who is doing all this creating and conducting these affairs in a specific manner. He is the one who is called *Paramāthmā*. 'Param' means high, or exalted. Since He is the cause of the entire universe and its indweller, the actor for all the actions and the Supreme Life, He is called *Paramāthmā*.

While speaking in accordance with the Adhvaitha *śāsthrās*, we have to start talking about the *Jīvā's* body, then *indhriyās*, followed by the *Anthahkaraṇa* that consists of the mind, *chitthā*, etc., and finally the unconstrained space of *Āthmā*, which has no actions corresponding to either the mind or the *indhriya*. But then, there is this *jagath*, where numerous *jīvās* receive the same kinds of experiences! There is no chance here to talk about how this *jagath* came into being. Several conflicting opinions exist regarding this even among the *adhvaithis*. Therefore, I'll simplify the *adhavaithis'* general opinions and explain it to you:

The *Jīvā* gets to experience the *jagath* only because of the existence of the mind. Since all the *janmās* and afflictions originate only from this, I mentioned that we should make this mind disappear and exist as *Āthmā*. An individual *Jīvā* gets the experience of the *jagath* through the mind. So it is all right to say that he should subdue the mind, remove this experience, and attain Self-Realization. But when he subdues his individual mind, the experience of the *jagath* ceases as far as he is concerned. But does it make the *jagath* itself disappear? The other *jīvās* do experience it through their minds, do they not? Just as the destruction of the jagath doesn't take place through his mind, it becomes quite clear that its creation isn't the imagination of his individual mind either. If the *jagath* is all his mental imagination, the other *jīvās* and the *jagath* for all the *jīvās* wouldn't all be uniformly alike and appear the same to everyone as an objective reality. Starting from the movement of the stars and planets down to the movement of the electrons and protons within an atom, so many wonderful events happen. While being wonderful, they also happen within the constraints of some law instead of each going off in its own way. Taking all this into account, we can't say that they have all been created by an individual *Jīvā's* mind.

It is enough if we take note of the fact that a *Jīvā* is bound in the *karmā* bundle and goes through so many troubles only because of this mind. If everything is the imagination of his mind, would a *Jīvā* ever create such a trouble for himself? If everything is the imagination of the mind and at the same time the mind is mostly inclined on getting involved in *pāpās* most of the time, then would this mind itself ordain tortures to itself as punishment for their *pāpās*?

Above all this there are so many *jīvās* that do appear external to this particular *Jīvā*. Did his mind create all of them? If so, he should be able to know the nature of everyone. But this doesn't seem to be so in daily life. However much we associate with some one, we don't seem to be able to determine what some one is like. We are sometimes fooled by some one whom we thought of as virtuous. On the other hand, some one whom we thought of as bad turns out to be virtuous later on.

There is yet another point: If you think of another person as your own imagination, each one of these other people might in turn think that you are their mental imagination too! If all the *jīvās* are the mental imaginations of some *Jīvā*, that would mean that all the other *jīvās* would cease to exist when this *Jīvā* destroys his mind and attains *mukthi* becoming one with *Āthmā*. However, in practice, although so many *Mahāns* have destroyed their minds and attained Adhvaitha *mukthi*, and yet this *Jīva prapancha* (world) and the jada prapancha do still exist, don't they? Reasoning along these lines, we see that an individual *Jīvā's* mind causes his experience of only the other *jīvās* and *jagath*. It however does not cause these *jīvās' and jagath's* very existence. Even so, unless there is a causal matter for all these things, they couldn't have come into being. The affairs of the *jagath* couldn't be functioning strictly following their laws in all these complex and intricate intertwining.

Īśwarā or Saguṅa Brahmam

What is that causal matter? It is none other than the *Māyā śakthi* (power). The same *śakthi*, which is making Brahmam appear as such multitudes of *jīvās* and the *jagath*.

Since Brahmam is such that no other entity could be foreign to it, this *Māyā śakthi* could also not be different from it. If so, it would contradict the fundamental definition of Brahmam that It is the supporting base of all. What we infer from this is that Brahmam not only exists as an entity that has no external connection, but it also has a state wherein it gives an appearance of a connection to its own *Māyā śakthi*. In the state where it has no connections and remains as a single solitary entity, it is called *nirguña* Brahmam. The same entity is called *Saguña* Brahmam when it is coupled with *Māyā*. *Guña* means individual characteristic - or individuality. That which has no *guña* is *nirguña*, and that which has *guñās* is *Saguña*. What we refer to as *Īśwarā* is this *Saguña* Brahmam, who conducts all the affairs of the *jagath*.

We call the same *Āthmā* as a *Jīvāthmā* when he is created in the *jagath* and is ruled over. When He is *Īśwarā*, or the *Saguña* Brahmam, who does this creating and ruling, He is called *Paramāthmā*.

If we say that (*nirguña*) Brahmam creates *jagath* when it is in the form of *Īśwarā* coupled with the *Māyā śakthi*, then we might want to call this *Īśwarā* as the *Mahā manas* (or the Supreme Mind). Just as the tiny *Jīvā* mind conducts its actions, in the Supreme Mind of *Paramāthmā*, who is *Īśwarā*, the *jagath* takes its shape. Since He conducts this *jagath's* affairs Himself, we are right in calling it the Supreme Mind. We might say that the Supreme Mind, which is the basis of all the *Jīvā* minds, could be called *Paramāthmā* - the same as what is sometimes referred to as the Cosmic Mind.

The big difference between our mind and this mind is that our mind cannot recognize *Āthmā*. Only when the mind is destroyed would *Āthmā* shine through. We already saw that *Īśwarā*, however, could exist as the Supreme Mind while still remaining as *Āthma jnāna rupi* (self-realized form).

Vēdhānthā 'Īśwarā' Is Not Śiva

The mention of *Īśwarā* shouldn't be taken to mean Śiva. In general, the sound of *Īśwarā* does pertain to Śiva. We differentiate *Śiva* and *Vishnu* temples as *Īśwarā* Temple and *Perumāḻ* Temple. The *Vaishnavās* don't call *Mahā Vishnu* as '*Īśwarā*'; instead, they call him *Bhagawān* and *Perumāḻ*. *Bhāgavathā* (which is derived from *Bhagawān*) has come to mean only *Vishnu bhaktha*. However, it is not so in the ancient *Vēdhāntha śāsthrās*, including that of *Rāmānujā's viśishtādhvaitha*. Including the tradition of *Rāmānuja*, all *Vēdhāntha śāsthrās* use the name '*Īśwarā*' to denote the *Paramāthma śakthi*, which creates, protects, and destroys the *Jīvā* and jada universe, the same one that I had called the Cosmic Mind. Even those who had determined this Supreme Power to be none other than *Mahā Vishnu* still called Him *Īśwarā*.

Later on, the *Vaishnavās* stopped using '*Īśwarā*' to name some one.

However, the name of the father of *Nādhamunigaḻ*, the one who is considered to be the very first *Āchāryā* in the Sri *Vaishnava* tradition, is *Īśwara Bhattar*. This tradition mentions two prominent *Āchāryā*s who preceded *Rāmānuja*. One is *Ālavandhār*, and the other one is *Nādhamunigaḻ*, grandfather of *Ālavandhār*. *Nādhamunigaḻ*'s father's name is *Īśwara Bhattar*. The *śakthi* that is ruling over the *Jīva lōka* is called *Īśwarā*.

Worship of Īśwarā

Therefore, though the books on Adhvaitha mostly mention *Āthmā* as the one who transcends a *Jīvā's indhriyās* and mind, there is also a *Paramāthma śakthi*, which is conducting the affairs of the *jagath*, that is above the *Jīvā's* mind and below *Āthmā*. It is this *Paramāthma śakthi* that is giving the *janmā* to a *Jīvā* according to his *karmās* and rules over him. The mind has to first worship the Supreme Mind, the *Paramāthmā*. Only then will it attain oneness with it and then move on to *Āthmā*, the basis of this *Paramāthmā*, and get completely dissolved in it. This is how *Āchāryā* has laid the way.

Śāsthric karmās must be performed to purify the mind. We must worship *Īśwarā*, the creator of ourselves, in order to bring together the mind that is scattering away towards many different things. Only after such purification and focusing, will it attain the conditioning that is necessary for losing its form in *Āthmā*. This is the stage at which we should take up the *jnāna mārga* and do self-inquiry. This is *Āchāryā*'s specification.

If the tiny mind meditates on the Supreme Mind and does *bhakthi* towards it with humility, the Supreme Mind thinks of blessing this tiny mind. It thinks with benevolent grace, 'Let me release him from *Māyā*,' and then it leads him in the *Āthmā* mārga (path) by granting him a desire and attachment towards Adhvaitha. Adhvaitha *śāsthrās* say that only through the blessings of *Īśwarā*, or the Cosmic Mind, that a *Jīvā* develops a taste for Adhvaitha.

'Īśwarānugrahēnaiva pumsām adhvaitha vāsanā'

While searching for the true, fundamental state of the essence of a *Jīvāthmā*, this *śāsthrā* talks about the body, *indhriyās*, then mind and then goes on to *Āthmā*, the basic fundamental support. However, after the *Jīvā's* mind, comes *Īśwarā*, another Supreme Mind that creates many *jīvās* and the *jagath*.

Research for Truth - From Jīvā's Angle, From Universe's Angle

The reason for this apparent omission of the level of *Īśwarā* in the *indhriya*-mind-*Āthmā* order is that the investigation proceeds from the *Jīvā's* point of view, going deeper and deeper into his internal basis. The body is the first visible entity; it is the *Jīvā's* individual body. Then come the *indhriyās* and their flair, the forces that control it; they are also the individual *Jīvā's*. Going further in, we discover the mind that is actually creating these flair and controlling them. This is still in the realm of the individual *Jīvā* - the individual mind. *Āthmā*, which is going to be attained in the end, is actually the fundamental supporting *sathya*, the essence of a *Jīvā*. Therefore, to be fair, it shouldn't even be called as that of an individual *Jīvā*, especially since the experience of this *Āthmā* is possible only when the individuality of a *Jīvā* is struck down. Nonetheless, since the *Jīvā* thinks of it as his true state, with a possessive 'his', it also ends up getting clumped with all the other aspects associated with an individual *Jīvā*. This is just from our point of view; in reality it can never be possessed by anything whatsoever. Therefore, such a *Jīvā*-centered study, which goes into the internal principles pertaining only to the *Jīvā*, ends up with the following sequence. This sequence starts with the body, consisting of the *indhriyās*, then the *Anthahkaraṅa* having the mind as its component, which controls these *indhriyās*, and then *Āthmā*, which is the basis of all these. Since the investigation is only about the *Jīvā*, the discussion of *Īśwarā*, who has created not only him, but also all the rest of the *Jīva prapancha* and jada *prapancha*, doesn't come in between the mind and *Āthmā*.

However, if the same principle of *sathya* is investigated from the *jagath's* angle, instead of the *iiva's* point of view, this principle of *Īśwarā* will come in.

The basic principle that is investigated as the fundamental support for the *jagath* is called 'Brahmam.' 'Brih' means 'huge.' Since this is the biggest of the big, it is called 'Brahmam.' It is the cause of all these *Jīvā* and jada *lōkas*, which consist of the crores and crores of life forms and the mind boggling areas of crores and crores of miles consisting of crores and crores of stars and other heavenly bodies. So it is certainly the biggest of the big, isn't it?. Hence the name 'Brahmam.' If it is such a cause of all, support of all, and the basis of all, shouldn't it also be the basic support of the *Jīvā*? Didn't we just say that such a basic support of *Jīvā*, or his true form, is *Āthmā*? Therefore, this makes *Āthmā* one and the same as Brahmam. So the ultimate entity that we reached coming from the *Jīvā's* point in the investigation for his basic *sathya*, turned out to be same as the ultimate entity that we arrived at coming from the *jagath's* point in the investigation for its basis.

Instead of saying Brahmam is nothing but *Āthmā*, it is more appropriate to say that *Āthmā* is nothing but Brahmam. Though *Āthmā* and Brahmam are one and the same, *Āthmā* is mainly thought of with respect to a *Jīvā*. So instead of calling Brahmam, which is the causal matter of all of the *jīvās* and jada as nothing but *Āthmā*, it is more appropriate to say, '*Āthmā* is nothing but Brahmam. That is, what appears as the entire universe, is the same as the 'you-s', 'me-s', and 'him-s', the various kinds of *jīvās.*' That is a more fitting description. The one who considers himself as a *Jīvā* is none other than Brahmam. His *Āthmā* is indeed the *Āthmā* of everything. '*Āthmā* of everything' doesn't denote many *Āthmās*. *Āthmā* is only one. It is the same *Āthmā* for all. That single entity dons the guise of the entire set of the *jīvās* and the *jagath* due to the power of *Māyā*. Only when following this logic, that is, investigating the basis from the *jagath's* point as opposed to the *Jīvā's* point, do we arrive at the Cosmic Mind, which is the *Māyā*-influenced *Īśwarā* form, right next to *Āthmā*. After that comes the creation of the smaller minds, followed by the individual *ahankāra* (ego) and the *jīvās*. This same *Īśwarā* creates the *jagath* whose experience is attained by the *Jīvā's* mind through his *indhriyās*

Let me explain it in another way.

Jīva Āthmā, Īśwara Āthmā

Inquiry into the *Jīvā's* basis leads us to the mind and then to *Āthmā*. Similarly, inquiry into the *jagath's* basis leads us to *Īśwarā*, who makes up all these things, intricately intertwines all these together, and then controls them. Further investigation leads us to the fundamental, basic *sathya,* which remains as a solitary existence with absolutely no action, as the basis of this *Īśwarā* Himself. When we say that *Īśwarā* does the creation of *jagath*, we are bound to investigate the basis for His true form to see what He is like when He does not do this activity. When we performed a similar investigation for the *Jīvā's* mind, we found out, 'The basis for this mind, which is constantly doing something, is *Āthmā*, which is simply existing without doing anything. Its presence is felt in a negative sense through sleep and unconsciousness and in a positive sense through *Samādhi*.' We understood that the mind performs its actions only by having this *Āthmā* as its basis; if it were not there, the mind itself wouldn't be there. This explanation that is given for an individual mind must also be applicable to the Cosmic Mind called *Īśwarā*. *Īśwarā* must also have a similar basic *sathya* that simply exists without doing anything. Just as *Jīvā* has an *Āthmā*, *Īśwarā* should also have an *Āthmā*. That is indeed the *Paramāthmā*.

Īśwarā is the basis of this *jagath*, which has numerous names, forms, characteristics, and actions. When this *Īśwarā* is existing in His basic, true, solitary state, what would it be like for Him to be this true form, or *Āthmā*? If we ponder this, we will understand that it will have to be without any name, form characteristic, or action. If you ask, 'How come,' let me ask, 'If it has a separate characteristic, form, action, and name, how is it then possible for it to make something that has different characteristics, actions, names, and forms?' We can understand it by looking at the example of the color spectrum and its basis. There are several colors in the spectrum, starting from violet on one end to red on the other, sequenced as V-I-B-G-Y-O-R. Where did all these seven colors originate? They say it is from the colorless light. They prove this scientifically by showing the color spectrum. We see the colorless sunlight refracting on the rain clouds, creating a beautiful rainbow. We see the wonderful sparkling of the seven colors out of a colorless diamond when light falls on its edges. We infer from this that the source that produces these seven colors is itself colorless. Similarly, the true form of the one that is the basis of this universe which has various kinds of characteristics, actions, names, and forms, has to be without any characteristics, actions, names, or forms. That is Brahmam, which the *adhvaithis* call *nirguńa, nishkriya, nāmarūpa rahitha* Brahmam.

We saw that the true form of the *Jīvā*, namely *Āthmā*, is one such entity too. Analyzing it from there, we can see that *Āthmā*, which is the true form of *Īśwarā*, couldn't be something similar to but different from the *Āthmā* of *Jīvā*; instead, both of them have to be one and the same. How?

Whether we consider it as the *Jīvā's Āthmā* or *Īśwarā's Āthmā*, whatever it is, we saw that it does not have any characteristic, action, place, name, form, possessions, etc. When we conclude that it is not like this, or like that (this is called '*nethi*' in *Vēdhānthā*) and hence not anything at all, we must consider it as a cipher. A cipher is a nonentity. Therefore, there couldn't be two ciphers or three ciphers. Only positive numbers can have several different values such as one, two, and three. Absence of such a value as a cipher can't be several. Therefore, there can't be one cipher which is *Jīvā's Āthmā* and another cipher which is *Īśwarā's Āthmā*. Both have to be the same.

It was designated to be a cipher only when viewing from the angle of the *Jīvā* and the *jagath*, since it didn't denote anything with respect to these. But in reality, how could it be a cipher? Everything is from this; without it, nothing else exists; it is the basis, and the true form. Having said all this, what does it mean to say that it is a cipher? Therefore, if we stop viewing things centered on ourselves, and instead centered on itself, we can see that it is not a cipher; it is really *pūrńam* (the whole, full, and complete). Just because the light doesn't show any of the seven colors, if we say that there is no such thing as light, isn't it totally incorrect? It is not displaying the colors, but it does have a unified appearance called light. Similarly, though the *Jīvā's Āthmā* does not display the *indhriyās*, mind, actions, and characteristics, it is a pure existence of *sathya* alone. We have found, 'Without that, this doesn't exist. All these are just a tiny shade of that. Just as light is refracted through the clouds or prisms to separate into a spectrum, the light of *Āthmā* is refracted through *Māyā* and separates into the *Jīvā's Anthahkaraña* and then expands up to the level of the *indhriyās*.' Therefore, it has to be a *pūrña* entity. The proof for this completeness or wholeness is in the tell-tale experience of the *Mahāns*. Only those *Mahāns* who have consolidated themselves in *Āthmā* exist with no wants and with total fulfillment. Nothing can be added to that fulfillment. Isn't such fullness to which nothing can be added, the *pūrñathvam* (Absolute completeness, wholeness)? Similarly, the thing that is even more clearly apparent is that the basic *sathya Āthmā* of *Īśwarā*, who creates all these *jagath* and controls all the *jīvās*, must most certainly be a *pūrñam*. When he exists as a separate individual called *Jīvā*, it is his *Anthahkaraña* that has distinguished this separate *Jīvā*. Similarly, the one who is called *Īśwarā* has been brought out by *Māyā* too. *Īśwarā* is nothing but Brahmam coupled with *Māyā*. The *Jīvā* and the *jagath* are only from Him. In this case, what should *Īśwarā's Āthmā* be like? Its light has directly refracted through *Māyā*, which is the cause of all the individual *jīvās', Anthahkarañas* put together and brought out the entire world of *jīvās* and the jada universe; this must certainly be a *pūrña* entity. Thāyumānavar says, '*Sarva paripūrña akhañda thathvam.*' ('entire, absolutely whole, unpartitioned, principle.') There is absolutely no doubt that it must indeed be like this.

The *Jīvā's Āthmā* is absolutely *pūrñam*; *Īśwarā's Āthmā* is also absolutely *pūrñam*. However, this couldn't be one *pūrñam* and that, another *pūrńam*. Just as there couldn't be two ciphers, two *pūrńams* couldn't be there either. Cipher is only one, and so is infinity. Even while saying, 'the two are one and the same,' we talk in terms of a number. So even calling it as 'one' is not correct. This is why *Āchāryā* called it 'Adhvaitham ', meaning, 'not two,' instead of calling it '*ēkam*', meaning, 'one.' Anyway, two *pūrńams* certainly can't exist. *Pūrńam* itself means 'that which doesn't have any entity such that this entity is not in it; in other words, there is no such entity that is outside of it.' In that case, how can there be an entity that is in excess of *pūrńam*? If one entity is completely contained in a *pūrńam* and becomes a part of it, how does it deserve to be called *pūrńam*?

Thus, whether they are cipher as viewed through our illusory, worldly vision or they are *pūrńam* as in their innate true state, they both are one and the same. They are certainly not separate from each other. In fact, it is technically incorrect to refer to them as 'both' or 'these' in plural. One single *Āthmā*, or *sathya*, or Brahmam has just become both *Īśwarā* as well as the *Jīvā*. Yet, in practical reality, *Īśwarā* and *Jīvā* appear to be different from *Āthmā*. Hence, the terminology of '*Jīvāthmā*' and '*Paramāthmā*.'

Jīvāthmā - Pramāthmā in Dhvaitha and Viśishtādhvaitha

We, who are so used to thinking in Dhvaitha mode, naturally think that *Paramāthmā*, who is omnipotent and omniscient, is different from the *Jīvāthmā*, who has very limited power and very limited knowledge. They are even referred to as the 'big life' and 'small life' respectively. It may appear that two persons with such an enormous difference as between a mountain and a deep gorge must certainly be two different people. This is the Dhvaitham preached by *Madhvāchāryā*. Since this philosophy consists of the opinion that *Paramāthmā* and *Jīvāthmā* are two different forms, this is called Dhvaitha.

Rāmānujāchāryā drew up the following principle, called *viśishtādhvaitha*. He said that unlike a potter who produces a pot that is completely different from himself, *Paramāthmā* doesn't create the *Jīvāthmā* as a completely separate entity. Just as the life operates on the body, He resides as the indweller within the *Jīvā* as the life of his life and operates his life. This is *Rāmānujā's* doctrine. This is what is known as *viśishtādhvaitha*. He has also defined the state of *mōkshā* as a *dhvaithic* mode. He has determined that *Jīvāthmā* can only be separate from *Paramāthmā* in *dhvaithic* mode and perform *bhakthi*; it can't just merge into the *Paramāthmā* and become one with it as Adhvaitha.

All right, in all these references to *Jīvāthmā*, what exactly is the *Āthmā*? It is only the real, inner, fundamental truth of the *Jīvā*. It is not the mind. Nor is it the *Anthahkaraṇa*. Philosophers of all schools, including the *dhvaithis*, agree on this point. They call this *Āthmā* an aloof witness. They do not go any further, saying anything about the innate experience of this aloof witness. They conclude by saying that *mōkshā*, which is experiencing *Īśwarā* in a *dhvaithic* mode, is the independent and innate state of experience of the *Jīvāthmā*.

The two separate *Āthmās*, called *Jīvāthmā* and *Paramāthmā*, don't need an elaborate explanation in the case of *dhvaithis*, who believe that the true, innate form of a *Jīvā* and the innate form of *Īśwarā* are eternally different. Even in the state of *mōkshā*, where he remains in his true, innate *Āthma swarūpa*, the *Jīvā* is still termed only as a limited power according to them. Otherwise, why should he be serving *Īśwarā* in the state of *mōkshā*? *Īśwarā* also remains simply as a great power. They do not go beyond it up to the level of defining His true, innate form as *sathya*, which doesn't engage in the *dhvaithic* act of displaying its power, hence eternally peaceful and action-less. They have this perception of the existence of numerous limited-powered souls and then one entity that rules them all with supreme power. With such a perception, isn't it appropriate to call the former ones as *Jīvāthmās* and the much higher *Īśwarā* as *Paramāthmā*? To them, Brahmam, which is the basis of all, cause of all, eternal, pure, liberated, and *sachithānandhā*, is simply *Īśwarā*. Their doctrine says that *Īśwarā* and the *jīvās* are to remain different from each other forever. In that case, if the *Jīvā* is the *Jīvāthmā*, they have to refer to *Īśwarā* as *Paramāthmā* in their *mōkshā lōka*, which they refer to as '*Parama* padham' or 'Param Dhamam,'.

Even the *adhvaithis,* who say that there is only one *Āthmā* in the ultimate state of *sathya*, do talk about two different entities of *Jīvāthmā* and *Paramāthmā* when they are viewed in the midst of the worldly affairs. In that state, they consider the *Jīvā,* who is bound by the *Anthahkaraṇa* on one side and on the other side, *Īśwarā*, who is far above this *Jīvā*, with the supreme, vast power due to *Māyā*. They refer to them as *Jīvāthmā* and *Paramāthmā* as if they are different. The *dhvaithis*, on the other hand, do not consider it as just a difference due to the worldly view; they say, 'This is the real *sathya*. There is one lower level *Jīvāthmā* and another higher level *Paramāthmā* with an eternal difference.'

Let us mull over these terms of *Jīvāthmā* and *Paramāthmā* a little more.

The *dhvaithis* (I am including the *viśishtadhvaithis* in this group as well) do not talk about the *Āthmā* of a *Jīvā* as a *nishkriya* (action-less), and *nirguṇa* (attribute-less) entity as the *adhvaithis* do. Yet, even they say that the *Jīvā's* current nature of indulging in the worldly enjoyment of objects through the *indhriyās* is not his true nature. The true nature of *Āthmā*, which is the real, innate form of the *Jīvā*, is to get released from the currents of nature and then think of *Īśwarā*, who is beyond *prakruthi*, and worship Him with love and *bhakthi*. The *Jīvā*, of course, does not realize that state right now, does he? Therefore, they have differentiated these two states in order to make the *Jīvā*, who is currently in the wrong state, realize *Āthmā*, which is the correct state. They used the name *'Jīvāthmā'* to denote that the *Jīvā* and *Āthmā* are somewhat different from each other.

Adhvaithis, on the other hand, accept the concept of *'Jīvāthmā'* in the lower states of dealing with the mundane world, but they do not accept this difference between *Jīvāthmā* and *Paramāthmā* in the highest state and talk of only one *Āthmā*. Even at the level of the worldly affairs, where the *Jīvā* doesn't recognize himself as *Āthmā*, the true 'I', he still thinks of something as 'I', doesn't he? So they have accepted this and decided to refer to this 'I' as *'Jīvāthmā'* as well.

Two Entities That Are Connected

If *Jīvā* and *Āthmā* are one and the same, or if the state of *Jīvā* mode and the state of existing simply as *Āthmā* are one and the same, then it is sufficient just to say either *Jīvā* or *Āthmā*. There is no need to combine the two and say *'Jīvāthmā.'* It might sound odd, but the very act of combining them together shows them as separate! We say 'Pāl Pāyasam' (milk pudding). 'Pāl' itself is not 'Pāyasam.' Something that is different from 'Pāl,' such as sugar, has been added to this; changing its natural form and enhancing its natural taste, it has been made into a different substance called 'Pāyasam.' Therefore, we call it 'Pāl Pāyasam.'

Unlike the milk and sugar, which are different from each other, 'Pāl' and 'milk' are one and the same. 'Pāl' is also called 'kshīram.' When two such words denote the same substance, do we ever combine them and say 'Pāl milk' or 'Pāl ksheeram?'

The logic behind the term *'Jīvāthmā'* becomes quite clear from this. If on the other hand *Jīvā* and *Āthmā* are totally unconnected, we can't combine them and say *'Jīvāthmā,'* either. Only because of their connection to 'Pāl,' we are able to say, 'Pāl Pāyasam,' Therefore, only when two things are neither identical nor totally unconnected, and yet are somewhat associated with each other, can we combine the two names and create a compound word.

The *Jīvā* has two states: the state in which it is in the *Jīvā* mode, and the other state in which it is aware of its true form and just exists as that form of *Āthmā*. At the same time, these two entities also have a connection; that is, *Āthmā*, the true entity, has also become the *Jīvā,* the false entity. Therefore, we combine them and say '*Jīvāthmā.*'

Why Paramāthmā Instead of Īśwarāthmā?

Well, just like saying '*Jīvāthmā,*' why are we not saying '*Īśwarāthmā*' and instead say '*Paramāthmā*?'

The reason for not saying *Īśwarāthmā* is because at no stage is *Īśwarā* not aware of *Āthmā*. Thus, since *Īśwarā* and *Āthmā* don't have separate identities and yet somewhat connected, we cannot use the rule of '*Īśwarā* plus *Āthmā* equals *Īśwarāthmā*.' *Īśwarā* always has *Āthma jnānā*. The Adhvaitha *śāsthrās* say that *Īśwarā* is not *nishkriya* (action-less) and *nirguña* (*guña*-less), but *Saguña*, who performs actions through *Māyā*. However, we shouldn't take it to mean that He is appearing different, forgetting His true form due to *Māyā*'s association. They never say that *Īśwarā* forgets His *Āthma swarūpa* as the *Jīvā* does.

That is why we don't say *Īśwarāthmā*. To indicate that it is higher than *Jīvāthmā*, we simply add a 'Param' and call it '*Paramāthmā.*'

A Few Principles of Adhvaitha

There are two or three theories even among the *adhvaithis* on the question of how the basic *sathya* appears as *Īśwarā* and how it appears as the *Jīvā*. They are called 'Bimba Prathibimba Vādha,' 'Avachcheda Vādha,' and 'Abhāsa Vādha.' If I start elaborating on the differences and the various arguments of the different groups, you'll feel as though you are left off blindfolded in a forest. Now *Māyā* has blindfolded us and left us in this forest of *samsārā*. I am giving this discourse in an attempt to loosen this blindfold ever so slightly. So I shouldn't start saying things that would achieve quite the opposite! Therefore, instead of delving deep into complex theories, I'll just cover them superficially.

If you go into the theories, one group says that even the '*Jīvā* mind' and 'cosmic mind' are not two different entities. If you ask, 'Then, did the *Jīvā* mind make up the cosmos (*jagath*)?' they give a Dhrushti-*Srushtivāda* (argument of what is seen is what is created) as, 'Yes, indeed! *Jagath* exists only in your own view, it doesn't have its own existence.' This is also called '*Ēka Jīvā vādha*' (single-*Jīvā* argument). They claim that the whole *jagath*'s creation exists only in one single *Jīvā's* vision (i.e. in one *Jīvā's* mental expression). They justify this by citing another name for *jagath*. *Jagath* is also called *lōka*. The root '*lōk*' means 'to see.' The English word, 'look,' is also derived from this. '*Lōkanām*' means 'to look.' The entity that has an existence only because it is seen (looked at) by us is called '*Lōka*m.' Even the words of 'locality' and 'locus,' which pertain to a place, are also derived from the root '*lōk*.' Even in Tamil, the world is called 'Pār' to denote its existence only due to the fact that it is seen. When *Thirumūlar* mentions the great *adhvaithic* principle in his verse he uses the word 'pār' to denote the earth.

Because you see it, the world is visible to you. If you don't see it, or turn your mind inward from the external view, the world disappears from your perspective. Taking this into consideration, the name of '*lōkam*,' 'location,' '*pār*' etc. might have been associated with *jagath*. *Jagath* itself gets its existence only because the *Jīvā* misunderstands this feature. You might ask, 'So how is it fair to say that *jagath* doesn't exist if the *Jīvā* doesn't see it? There is even an adage that says, 'If a cat closes its eyes, would the world get darkened?''

Those who gave this Dhrushti-*Srushtivādha* are also great scholars. We should simply take it as their utterances in some higher state where they viewed it in this manner. It is not proper to criticize it from our angle. At some stage in the process of transporting the mind of a *Jīvā* beyond *Māyā* by the Cosmic Mind, or *Īśwarā*, the mind of the *Jīvā* will attain a sense of merging with that Cosmic Mind. That is, right before reaching the state of *nirguṅa Āthmā*, a state will be reached where it will feel as though it has become one with the *Saguṅa Īśwarā*, who is actually aiding this transition and is conducting all the worldly affairs. At that time, that super-mind's creation would appear to be the *Jīvā's* own imagination. But in reality, the *Jīvā* doesn't become *Īśwarā*.

Jīvā Cannot Become *Īśwarā*

Even *Āchāryā*, who proclaimed the *adhvaithic* principle of 'everything is one', said that Brahmam and *Jīvā* are one and the same only in the *nirguṅa* state; he never said that *Jīvā* and *Īśwarā* are one and the same in the *Saguṅa* state. He says that when the *Jīvā* is well immersed in the Cosmic Mind, it is true that many of the awesome powers of that Mind, which is that of *Īśwarā*, will be acquired by this *Jīvā* too. However, the power to manage the entire *jagath*, which is the very nature of *Īśwarā*, will not be attainable to him.

This is addressed in the last line of the final chapter in Brahma Sūthra, when it talks about a liberated soul - one who has attained the eternal, supreme bliss by breaking away from the mind, which knows only petty desires. A question is posed as to whether the *Jīvā* will attain all the powers of *Īśwarā* when he reaches the state of *sāyujya*, the connection with the *Saguṅa Īśwarā*, before the mind gets dissolved into the *nirguṅa* Brahmam.

In answer to that, *Bādharāyanā* (*Vyāsā*), who has composed the Brahma Sūthra, affirmed, 'All the other powers will be attained; but the power to create, protect, and destroy the *jagath* will never be attained by a *Jīvā*.' When writing the *bhāshya* for this, our *Āchāryā* answers the question, 'When everything is Brahmam and the *Jīvā* is able to proceed in the *jnāna mārga* and become one with Brahmam, why is it that he can never become *Īśwarā*?'

Only in the actionless state can both become one; while action still exists, it cannot happen. This is because, two entities cannot do the same action. If I talk, gallivant around town, or deceive all of you, the one who does all these things could only be me. Another person cannot do these identical things exactly as and when I do. Action is Dhvaitham. Action involves another one. There is no action only in the state of Adhvaitha, where there is no other entity, and there is only a solitary existence. In the action-laden Dhvaitha, how is it possible for two things to merge into one? Since the state wherein the action-less Brahmam becomes the creator of the *jagath* is called *Īśwarā*, He has to be in Dhvaitha mode. There is no room for any discussion about the true form of *Jīvā*, the action-less Adhvaitha *Āthmā* merging and becoming one with the action-laden *Īśwarā*. *Āthmā* is changeless. If *Īśwarā* removes the presence of *Māyā*, which was responsible for making *Āthmā* appear as the *Jīvā*, the *Jīvā* simply becomes that (*Āthmā*), that's all. There is no room for *Īśwarā* to absorb this *Āthmā* into His *Saguña* form. It is an impossible situation. The only thing that captures and experiences the entity called *Īśwarā*, which is in *dhvaithic* mode, is the *Jīvā's* mind, which is also in *dhvaithic* state. It doesn't matter whether it is an absolutely pure mind that is not caught up in the petty pleasures of the *indhriyās'* pull, or whatever else. As long as it experiences another entity called *Īśwarā*, who is in a *dhvaithic* stage, it implies that it should also be in a *dhvaithic* state with all the *guñās* and actions.

When looking at it only from this level, we must accept that they do not merge into one even in the *mōkshā* defined by the doctrines of the Dhvaitha and *visishtādhvaitha*. They are *jīvās* who have not yet reached their deepest level of the action-less *Āthmā*. These doctrines are of the opinion that doing *bhakthi* with love towards *Īśwarā*, performing service to Him, and so on, are the ones that give the everlasting bliss of *mōkshā* to a *Jīvā*. For their *Īśwarā*, they say that *nirguña* is not His true form. *Saguña* is their ultimate end. Only we, *adhvaithis*, talk about the same Brahmam in two different states. Just as mentioning two different entities of *Jīvāthmā* and *Paramāthmā* within one single *Āthmā*, we classify the same Brahmam as in two states: *nirguña* Brahmam that has no worldly actions and *Saguña* Brahmam that causes all worldly affairs. For them, Brahmam means only *Saguña Brahma Īśwarā*. There is no *nirguña*. If you look at it from the perspective of their fundamental opinion, you have to conclude only like that. If the everlasting state of *mōkshā* for a *Jīvāthmā* is only service, then *Īśwarā* should also be some one who accepts such a service of *bhakthi* forever and then shows His *krupa* (grace). Accepting something, granting *krupa,* and all these denote only action - of course, *dhvaithic*. Therefore, since the one who has to do this forever is *Īśwarā*, He can never absorb the *Jīvā* and will have to leave him outside of Himself. According to their definition of *mōkshā*, the *Jīvā* has to be kept distinct. He has to maintain the status of His omnipotence, receiving service, while keeping them limited-powered and performing service. If He doesn't get rid of actions and nor do they, it can only remain different like this; becoming one is impossible. In the action-less state of sleep, an emperor and a pauper could be having the same peaceful experience. When action comes in and one is an emperor, how is it possible for the pauper to be like him?

You might ask, 'All right, it is not possible for the *Jīvā* to become one with *Īśwarā*. Even then, through His infinite grace, *Īswarā* could exist as Himself and at the same time provide all His powers to the *Jīvā* also, could He not?' But He will not do that at all. Because if He does that, bestowing this supreme grace to this particular one could end up causing great hardships to the entire *jagath*. How is that? Because, in the management of the *jagath*, He has set up a certain order as to when such and such a thing can occur, an action such as creation or dissolution should happen, an so on. Since this is the decision of just one person, the affairs of the *jagath* are proceeding in an orderly, regular manner. Let us say a *Jīvā* also gets the full power of *Īswarā*. Then, when the original *Īswarā* decides to create, this *Jīvā* might start dissolving it. When He starts dissolving something, this *Jīvā* might start creating it. Things might degenerate to such a disorder that the whole world might become chaotic. Citing only this reason, *Āchāryā* says in this *Brahma Sūtra bhāshya* that a *Jīvā* becomes only Brahmam and not *Īswarā*.

Without becoming *Īswarā*, the *Jīvā* can still receive all His powers with just the one exception of the management of the *jagath*. Even the appearance of becoming one with *Īswarā* might occur due to the intense ecstasy of the *prēma bhakthi* (*bhakthi* with love). It is only an appearance, not real. Only while remaining in the ecstatic mode would they experience the feeling of attaining all of His powers. This is just a possessed state of *Īswarā*. This will go away: while experiencing such a state, several *Mahāns* have composed songs that indicate their feelings as though this world, oceans, mountains and stars are all their creation. They would know the inside and out of all *jīvās*. Therefore, if we asked them, 'If it is your creation, why don't you give an account of the affairs of all the *jīvās*?' they wouldn't find themselves in a bind like us. They would report everything at that state of omniscience. As the *jnānis* of the past, present, and future, they would say even what is going to happen. We should infer that the Dhrushti-Srushti doctrine as well as the doctrine of '*sarva mukthi*,' which says that if this one *Jīvā* became liberated, all others would too, occurred in such a state. Yet, this possessed state is not permanent. The *Jīvā* does not become *Īśwarā*.

Dhvaitha Jīvā Has Connection to Īśwarā

Though *Īśwarā* remains as the action performing *Saguṇa* entity in the state of Dhvaitha, He is not like a *Jīvā*, who knows only Dhvaitha. He doesn't stay ignorant of His true form of Adhvaitha. He always has the *jnānā* that He appears as *Īśwarā* outwardly in the Dhvaitha mode and at the same time, internally He exists as Adhvaitha *Āthmā* or *nirguṇa* Brahmam. He always knows that He is *Īśwarā* outside and Brahmam inside. When some one approaches His outside appearance of *Īśwarā* with *bhakthi*, He is also capable of sending them inside Himself and making him get absorbed into Brahmam.

This is the same aspect that *Bhagawān* told Arjuna in the later part of the *Gītā* as He was nearing its end. He said, 'If you approach me with Bhakthi, you will then start to learn what my internal form is like. Later on, you will go to the very inside.'

I have already mentioned over and over again that *Jīvā* cannot exist without thinking, and he derives his identity through this very thinking mind. If you tell this *Jīvā* to think about *Āthmā*, which actually transcends the thinking, it is simply impossible for him. This is when we say, 'Think about *Īśwarā*.' The *dhvaithic* mind of the *Jīvā* is capable of thinking the *dhvaithic Īśwarā*, who conducts the *jagath's* affairs. The *Jīvā*, who is incapable of establishing a connection with *Āthmā*, can indeed make a connection to *Īśwarā*.

The *Jīvā*, of course, cannot fully understand or comprehend the enormous game of the affairs of the *jagath*, nor the enormous power that plays this game. That is all right. All *Īśwarā* is asking of the *Jīvā* is the love towards Himself; He is not expecting the knowledge of Himself from this *Jīvā*. Therefore, He says, 'Out of love, if you perceive me in any form whatsoever, I will lovingly bestow my grace on you.' Whatever the capacity of our mind, to that extent if we capture His vast power, that is enough. He promises to bestow His grace. What is this grace? It is none other than the grace of letting us comprehend His true form. The gift of *jnānā* is indeed the infinite grace of *Īśwarā*.

That true form is not only His vast, powerful Self. He shows that it is nothing but remaining as the total *sathya*, the basis of His own power, and then blesses the *Jīvā* with such *Brahmā Sākshāthkāram* (Self-Realization). We already saw that this same Brahmam, which is mentioned as the basic sathya of the vast universe's energy, is called *Āthmā* when it is discussed as the true form of the *Jīvā*. Therefore, when we say that he realizes Brahmam, which is the true form of *Īśwarā*, the creator of the *jagath*, it also means that the *Jīvā* realizes *Āthmā*, his own true form. At this stage, it makes the duality of *Paramāthmā* and the *Jīvāthmā* vanish.

Yet, the *Jīvā* is not able to know *Āthmā* in His *Jīvā* mode. The same *Āthmā*, when He appears as *Īśwarā*, performing the affairs of the *jagath*, is always aware of Himself as *Āthmā*. Even though the *Jīvā's* mind is *dhvaithic* and *Īśwarā* is involved in the affairs of the Dhvaitha *prapancha*, there is this big difference. The *Jīvā* has no *Āthma jnānā*. As soon as he acquires that *jnānā*, his *Jīvā* mode disappears. *Īśwarā*, on the other hand, has the complete *Āthma jnānā* at all time. Since it is there, His *dhvaithic Īśwarā* mode is unaffected. Such a big difference!

Īśwarā-Jīvā: Avidhyā-Anthahkaraña

Adhvaitha *sāsthrā* says that neither *Jīvā*-mode nor *Īśwarā*-mode is the true form. The single *sathya* has become the *Jīvā* and *Īśwarā* through the connection of *Māyā*. This *sāsthrā* has given a definition for these, citing their differences. It says that Brahmam appears as *Īśwarā* when it is coupled with *Avidhyā*, and it appears as *Jīvā* when it is coupled with *Anthahkarańa*. *Avidhyā* is nothing but *Māyā*. *Anthahkarańa* is what we generally call the mind. It exists along with *chitthā*, *buddhi*, and *ahankāra*, somewhat like its parts. We have already discussed this. In other words, the one who is confined within each tiny mind is the *Jīvā*. The *Māyā śakthi* that portrays *Āthmā* as such a confined entity is *Īśwarā*. Because it is a power that hides the only true entity of *Āthmā*, makes it appear as though non-existent, and finally makes numerous false *jīvās* appear as though real, it is called *Māyā* (illusion). The same thing is also called ajnāna (ignorance). Another name for ajnāna is *Avidhyā*. (There is yet another opinion that makes a few finer distinctions between these concepts. But I am just presenting the general opinion.) To know the *sathya* is *jnānā* or *vidhyā*. The root 'vidh' also means 'to know,' just as *jnānā*. True knowledge is *vidhyā*. Instead of being such a true knowledge, since it makes you think the unreal as real and the real as unreal, *Māyā* is called *Avidhyā*. Even so, *Īśwarā*, who is in the state of being joined together with this *Māyā śakthi*, is not an *ajnāni* as far as He is concerned. He is described as *'Īśāna: Sarva Vidhyānam'* - '*Īśwarā* of all the knowledge as well.' Though He makes us all *ajnānis* through *Māyā*, He is not like that. Though He is keeping *Māyā* with Him, He is doing it in such a way that He is not bound by it. He has tied us up with the *Anthahkarańa*, which constricts us into various little pieces. Because of this, we either exist only as the bound *jīvās* like this, or when He unties us and sends us inside Him, we exist only as *Āthmā*, shedding all our ajnāna. He, on the other hand, remains as *Āthma jnāni* while also conducting the affairs of the world as though appearing to be bound by the Dhvaitha *Māyā*. The only thing that appears to be limiting Him is the *Māyā*, or *Avidhyā*, whereas the entity that limits a *Jīvā* is the *Anthahkarańa* that resulted from *Māyā*. This creates a different individual mind for each and every *Jīvā* and limits them to a very small shell. *Māyā* is general. It is common to all these *Anthahkaraňas. Māyā* is a common power that hides the true form to all of the *jīvās* together. Because of such hiding of the true knowledge, it is called *Avidhyā*. Yet, *Īśwarā* who conducts the affairs of the world through it, doesn't lose His true knowledge as far as He is concerned.

This is explained using the following examples. They say, 'A snake is not affected by its own venom, even though its fangs are right within its mouth. It poisons only those who are bitten by it. Similarly, the 'Mayi' or the *'Māyāvi'* (trickster) *Īśwarā* is not affected by His own *Māyā*, but this *Māyā* only affects the *Jīva lōka* at which He directs it. A magician just tricks his audience and makes them believe that his magical scenarios are real, while he is not fooled himself, thinking that they are real. They say that *Īśwarā*, the creator of this *Māyā jagath*, is also the same as this.

A limiting condition is called *upādhi. Īśwarā* is the one who possesses *AiśwĀryā* that is not affected by any such *upādhi*. This is the explanation that *Āchāryā* gives when he elaborates on the name *Īśwarā* in *Vishňu Sahasranāmā* while writing his *bhāshya* for it. *AiśwĀryā* means *Īśwarā's* possession or his characteristic. One who possesses the power to rule is *Īśwarā*. The root 'Is' means 'to rule,' 'to govern,' or 'to command.' Would such a person who rules everyone else allow *Māyā* to subdue and rule Himself? Though He is coupled with *Māyā, Īśwarā* controls and rules that *Māyā* itself. So He wouldn't let it show its strength on Him and allow it to create a false 'I' for Him.

We just learned that the *Jīvā* doesn't recognize *Āthmā* and exists in two different modes: one as *Jīvā* and the other as *Āthmā*. At the same time, they are not totally unconnected, either - hence the coining of the word '*Jīvāthmā*.' We also learned that since *Īśwarā* is always aware of *Āthmā* and stays in that state of *jnānā*, the *Īśwarā* mode and *Āthmā* are not two different, yet connected, entities. Hence, He is not '*Īśwarāthmā*;' instead, He is called *Paramāthmā*.

In that case, why should He be called *Paramāthmā*? Isn't mere *Āthmā* sufficient? No, it is actually not sufficient. The unqualified reference to '*Āthmā*' will keep us, *jīvās*, from thinking about the *jagath* and *Īśwarā's* actions, which are the affairs of the *jagath*. We tend to think of *Āthmā* as the totally attribute-less state, where even *Īśwarā* ceases. Hence, the adjective '*Parama*.'

Why is '*Parama*,' or 'Para,' used as a prefix to *Āthmā*? It is because, *Īśwarā* is at a much higher place than the *Jīvā*. Since He doesn't exist as *Āthmā* only, He cannot be simply referred to as *Āthmā*. When looking from His angle as *Īśwarā*, since *Āthmā* is not different from Him, He can't be referred to as *Īśwarāthmā* either. But when looking at Him from our angle, *Āthmā*, the single entity, dons the guise of *Īśwarā* and appears much higher, as great, omniscient, and omnipotent, compared to us, who are *ajnānis* and of limited-power. So we find that *Paramāthmā* is the term that would be apt to make His higher status apparent.

This statement is from the *adhvaithis'* point of view. All this rhetoric was necessary to clarify the reason why the same *Āthmā* needs to be referred to in two different ways as *Jīvāthmā* and *Paramāthmā*. This *Jīvāthmā-Paramāthmā* duality is just one among so many dualities that are accepted by Adhvaitha while viewing from a practical worldly perspective just below the ultimate top level.

Dhvaitha Mōkshā and Prakruthi (Māyā)

Each and every one of these doctrines defines *mōkshā* as the state wherein everlasting joy is experienced, liberated from the track of *karmā* and escaping from the cycle of *samsārā*. Followers of the other schools say that such *mōkshā* with everlasting joy materializes when we leave this world and reach the abode of the *Paramāthmā*, after which no other births occur and we remain with Him forever. According to their doctrine, the *Jīvā* resides with *Paramāthmā*, who is different from him; does *bhakthi* towards Him; and serves Him even while in the *mōkshā* state where he remains as *Āthmā*, his true form. Thus, this doctrine implies that the *Jīvā* always has feelings and thoughts such as *bhakthi* and actions such as service.

They say that in this world (be it *Vaikūntā* or *Kailāsa*), it is possible to exist without the association of *Māyā* even though there is still a mind to think of such *bhakthi* and a body to do such service. So there will not be any troubles similar to the ones we get into in this *Māyā* world through the mind and body that are under the spell of *Māyā*. Everything will be only good.

However good it might be, we see that it is still not the same as simply existing as *Āthmā*. During sleep, unconsciousness, and *Samādhi*, we can perceive *Āthmā* as present with neither the good nor the bad. Whatever is referred to as 'good' can only be something that is different from *Āthmā*, which is perceived by its *Jīvā* aspect. In other words, this 'good' is only one among many *dhvaithic* entities that are to be perceived and experienced by *Jīvāthmā*. If *Jīvāthmā* is in a state where it could perceive and experience another entity, it cannot perceive and experience itself. How can two things be perceived and experienced at the same exact time? When our mind is not focused and our intellect is not steady, we have this trait of entertaining several thoughts, superficial browsing of several things, and experiencing several sequences of shallow experiences, etc. On the other hand, when the mind is focused on something, the thought and the intellect will experience this one thing only. Only such absorption into one thing while being oblivious to the surroundings and whatever might be happening there, makes it the full and true perception and experience. That is, at one specific instance, it cannot perceive and experience more than one entity. Therefore, even in *Vaikūntā* or *Kailāsa*, in spite of being *aprākrutham* (without *Māyā*), as long as the *Jīvāthmā* is experiencing *Īśwarā*, a 'good' that is different from itself, it only means that it is not perceiving and experiencing itself. Do you think *Jīvā's* true state would be one wherein it doesn't perceive itself? Could a state that doesn't merge him in his true form be *mōkshā*? A state that doesn't have *Āthma jnānā*, or Āthmic experience (both are really the same), cannot be accepted as the true state of the *Jīvā* or *mōkshā*. This is what the *adhvaithis* say.

Action and thought are aspects that are created in *Āthmā*, which are foreign to it. '*Krutham*' means 'that which is made.' 'Is made' implies what is not naturally existent, doesn't it? The word '*prakruthi*' is derived from this '*krutham*.' '*pra*,' the prefix, emphasizes the '*krithi*' that it prefixes. Though '*prakruthi*' is used to mean 'nature,' since it creates attributes and actions for *Āthmā*, whose true form is attribute-less and action-less, *prakruthi* is really an unnatural, made-up entity. No matter what a highly noble act it is, be it the act of meditating on *Bhagawān*, doing *bhakthi* towards Him, or serving Him, etc., it is still something external to the true state of *Āthmā*. There is no real glory to the claim that this *aprākruthkam*. *Bhagawān* talks about two levels of *prakruthis* in the seventh chapter of *Gītā*: a lower-level *apara prakruthi* and a higher-level *para prakruthi*. Perhaps the dhvaithis can make a similar statement that this *prakruthi* in the *mōkshā* state is at a higher level, drawing the *Jīvā* towards *Bhagawān* and merging him into Him, as opposed to the lower-level *prakruthi* that drags him down into the pleasures of the objects. *Bhagawān* Himself talks only about such a higher-level *prakruthi* and then He goes on to talk about the state of Brahmam, which is attribute-less and action-less. However, He never talks about an *aprākruthkam* that has no connection to *prakruthi* while still associated with *guṇās* and actions.

As long as the *Jīvā* goes to some world and resides there, it is really connected to *prakruthi* in some way. That is, it has connection to *Māyā*. How is *mōkshā* feasible when *Māyā* is still there? They could probably say, 'Since this *Māyā* works only towards the good, we might as well stay right here. We will consider this itself as *mōkshā*.' But how can they say, 'This is *mōkshā*, indeed'? How can they say that a *mōkshā*, as defined by the *adhvaithis*, where the *Jīvā* and Brahmam fuse into one, doesn't exist?

There have also been some elders who didn't insist that Dhvaitha is the ultimate *mōkshā*, even though Dhvaitha is what they found attractive. They did agree that Adhvaitha is indeed the *mōkshā*, but they didn't want that state. The poet *Sēkkizhār* says that the great *Śiva bhakthās* in Thiruvarur, called 'Thirukkuttathar,' belonged to one such group: He says 'We should simply merge with *Īśwarā* with love and keep doing *bhakthi* towards Him. We don't want to go even to *mōkshā* leaving this.' This is what those *Siva bhakthās* thought. Such a statement implies that they (including *Sēkkizhār*) did not consider reaching a world such as *Kailāsa* and doing the loving *bhakthi* in the Dhvaitha mode as *mōkshā*.

Though they reject the Adhvaitha *mōkshā*, they seem to have a neutral *adhvaithic* view of everything in this world. Except for the concept of *Jīvā*-Brahmam unification, they had actually been *adhvaithis*. They had viewed both a ball of clay and gold as the same: They are portrayed as being in such an auspicious mental state that they found no distinction between creation and dissolution. Destruction and misfortune wouldn't touch them, nor would creation and a life with glorious possessions. They are '*thiruvinār*' (highly auspicious), with absolute equanimity.

Auspiciousness is synonymous to Lakshmi, who is the same as '*thiru.*'

For Dhvaithic Tendency, Misery is Unavoidable

Do these worlds of *Vaikūntā* and *Kailāsa*, the places hailed as *mōkshā* by the *dhvaithis,* really have everlasting good? It doesn't seem to be so. *Purāñās* reveal that at least under some circumstances, even great souls such as *Mahālakshmi, Garudāzhvar*, *Ādhisēsha*, and *Nāradā* have gotten caught up in emotions like anger, sorrow, and competition. We see that they even acquire curses pronounced upon them. For that matter, it has happened even to *Bhagawān*. I already mentioned that He has put even Radha, who is said to be His dearest, through so much pain caused by His separation.

As long as there are two entities, such alternating pleasures and pains are inevitable - Dhvaitha wouldn't be interesting without the pairs of opposites. Even a story that describes how all the characters were happy all the time would become boring. It is more interesting only when problems are encountered. - The wife gets abducted; at the hero's crowning ceremony, some lady raises some problem and stops it; the heroine is crying standing in the middle of the court humiliated by her enemies with none coming to her support; everyone getting into a brawl, and so on.

In Dhvaitha, the experience of happiness occurs only with respect to something else. Therefore, it couldn't last forever without getting tired of it. So only if it disappears in between and comes back again can we enjoy it without becoming tired of it. Regaining something that is lost increases the pleasure of its experience much more in Dhvaitha. That is why *Bhagawān* makes even his dearest ones become separated from him. Pairs of opposites are part and parcel of Dhvaitha. Then only it has appeal - day, night; Iceland, Sahara; tiger, fawn; screw pine flower (*thazham* flower), aloe; birth, death; wedding, the other one; rice pudding, hot pickle; finally, good and bad and pleasure and pain.

When such intermittent grief comes, the pleasure is not everlasting. If the everlasting pleasure is not there, it is not *mōkshā*. Experiencing the unsatiating, everlasting happiness is only possible when the *adhvaithic* Self-Realization occurs.

This is what we, the *adhvaithis*, say.

There are other traditions such as Kashmiri *śaivaites*, who do not follow the process of reaching a world such as *Vaikūntā* or *Kailāsa* and reside there with *Vishnū* or *Śiva* who are present in their concrete forms. They follow the philosophic path that talks about being absorbed in an exalted state of meditation. Even in those traditions, they do not talk about unification, but simply meditation and being absorbed in it. So even in these, there is room for the concentration to be thrown off, away from the target of the meditation. Though it is a formless *Siva* instead of *Siva* with form, it is still not becoming that *Siva* Himself, but only the intertwining with it in meditation, like woven threads. Just as a thread that is intertwined with another one can be removed by twisting it in opposite directions, such separation is possible here, too. Therefore, even the bliss of meditation is not everlasting. Adhvaitha is the only everlasting bliss.

Task of Getting Purified

That *adhvaithic* state can be attained only after the mind is purified, having all the *karmās* spent, and settled at the highest position of the goal with a single focus. Until that is achieved, only *dhvaithic* practices should be followed meticulously, while retaining the thought of Adhvaitha as the basic unbroken thread.

To get purified, we must perform actions that have been designated by *vēdhā sāsthrā* according to our *swadharmā*. We should melt in *bhakthi* while soaking our mind with the love for *Bhagawān* in order to remove the dirt of Kāma and *krōdha*. Merely declaring, 'I am the unattached *Āthmā*' in the present state that we are in, is of no use. We don't understand *Māyā* that is associated with *Āthmā*. Haven't we accumulated so much dirt, birth after birth? At the slightest provocation, how we get so angry and afraid! How many desires are pulling us so hard!

Like Scrubbing a Pot

We were discussing the process of the cessation of mind, speech, language, etc. Let us say that a copper jug was buried in dirt for a long time and is now caked with mud and grime sticking to it solidly. It is true that the jug is underneath all this dirt. But what is the use? We find that we have to scrub it with so much tamarind, good soil, and scrubbing pad. The verdigris doesn't go away that easily. We claim that we are doing all these things to remove the green deposit on it and make it shine again. But in reality, all our scrubbing is only to remove the verdigris. After all the deposits are removed, the utensil shines on its own. We didn't make it shine. We didn't create some new utensil. Nor did we create its purity. We only removed the thick impurity that was covering it. That's all.

Āthmā is like this copper utensil. We have smeared so much dirt on it, making it completely invisible. We have let the dirty soil cake solidly all over it by the thoughts that we think through the mind, the words that we speak through the mouth, and the actions that we carry out through the body. In this situation, though we know that *Āthmā* is inside, if we want to realize it, we do have to purify it. We have to keep scrubbing and washing it by neutralizing the bad that we have committed through the mind, speech and body by means of the good performed by the same mind, speech and body. This is just as the scrubbing of the jug with good soil, scouring pad, and tamarind to remove the grimy soil on it. In the very end, all the good soil, the pad, and tamarind are also dirty (tamarind is not suitable for the progress of *sathva guńa*. Saints and *sanyāsis* must not have tamarind in their food). However, in the beginning, they are the ones capable of removing the dirt. Finally, when we rinse it off with pure water, we wash away these impurities also. What we had used to remove the impurity, is itself considered as impurity in the end and we pour pure water over it to remove them also. Similarly, in the very end, these mind, speech and body should also be considered as impurities that dirty the *Āthmā*, and they should be washed away by the down pour of the spiritual inquiry. Just because pure water cleans it at the end, is it enough to rinse off the jug that was caked with grime, mud and verdigris with just pure water? Thinking that spiritual inquiry is enough even in the beginning stages, is akin to this. In the beginning, we have to remove all the caked up bad *karmā* that we have accumulated over several births. We should do this by performing the *karmās* specified by the *sāsthrās* and the noble deeds of service to others, using our body and words accompanied by the noble thoughts of love and *bhakthi* and the attributes of discipline and humility. Only after that should these too be washed off and removed by the pure water of *jnānā*, since they don't possess the everlasting peace and bliss of the experience of *Āthmā*, either. Even the act of meditation implies remaining as something different other than just being *Āthmā*. The ultimate finality is stopping even that and remaining simply as *Āthmā*. But that is only at the absolute end. Words and intellect cannot be used to explain how this final transformation occurs. Because, it is a stage that transcends intellect, mind and speech.

This is exactly what is conveyed by the quotation from the Upanishad that we hear so often these days. How can we explain this state using these media when they are not capable of perceiving this state themselves? Since all these aspects of mind, speech and body consciousness cease to exist after reaching that state - not only the pāpa*s* committed by them, but also the puṅyas cease along with it. That Upanishad itself states that some one who has attained this state that is out of reach for the mind and speech, doesn't then ask, 'Why didn't I do such-and-such puṅya, or why did I do such-and-such *pāpa*?' *Āthmā* is not such a doer who performs actions and experiences its effects. Since he realizes that *Āthmā* to be 'I,' he behaves like that. But how can we, who don't know that 'I,' stay inactive like him?

After washing off and removing the cleaning materials such as the good soil and tamarind with pure water, we do not let even that pure water stick to the copper jug. The presence of the water would again cause the verdigris to get deposited. Therefore, we thoroughly wipe off even that water. Similarly, the meditation and self-inquiry would also cease when one attains Self-Realization.

Even when kept completely clean and dry, in course of time, the materials in the air could again cause this verdigris to get deposited on the jug. So it should be cleaned and dried periodically. *Āthma Nishtā* is also analogous to this. After getting purified with so many rituals, the experience of *Āthmā* will come and go like a lightning flash. *Kēnōpanishad* says, 'It is a lightning of lightning; it remains like a wink of an eye and then vanishes.' *Nārāyaṅa Sūkthā* describes it elaborately as that which remains inside as an everlasting lightning. However, if we just looked at it from practical experience, even after numerous *sādhanās*, it remains flashing like a lightning flash for a very long time. As long as it is still in that stage, when the flash of such lightning of the Āthmic experience vanishes, we do have to continue the observances and other *sath karmā sādhanās* just as cleaning the jug again that was already cleaned thoroughly. When continuing like this, Self-Realization becomes permanent only when all the *karmās* are spent and the knot of the impressions of the past *karmās* in the heart just snaps off, as it is mentioned in Mundaka

Upanishad. At that time, the jug is no longer copper, but it becomes gold. It would never get the verdigris deposit again. Even gold loses its luster after some time and requires polishing. *Āthmā* is above that. It is like the sun, whose glow doesn't diminish.

The 'Ravai Salla' Analogy

In this nation, our ancestors were very meticulous that the temple, which should provide mental purity, should be absolutely clean in its external appearance, and they saw to it that it was carried out exactly that way.

In those days in Thirupathi the 'Ravai Salla *Kattaḻai*' used to be carried out. *Ravai Salla* is a kind of fabric that is very fine and white, like 'Dacca muslin.' When you wear it, you wonder whether you are wearing anything at all. It would be so transparent. When something is woven so finely and delicately, wherever it is spread, be it a floor or body, it will adhere to it so well. Even a little bit of moisture from the body or the floor will be thoroughly absorbed by it. Since its texture is such, even when it comes into a slight contact with anything, any dirt from the other surface will get onto this cloth. Since it is pure white, such dirt will also show very prominently.

They used to pay so much attention to keeping *Perumāḻ sannidhi* in Thirupathi absolutely clean with no trace of dirt. Since it is a place where *abhishēkam* (ritual pouring) is performed, wouldn't the materials used in the *abhishēkam* land on the floor and make it dirty? In addition to that, there would be drops of oil dripping from the lamps, making it also sticky. When the priests walk over them, these materials and grease would get all mixed up in a gooey mess and make the floor dirty. They used to scrub this floor of the sanctum sanctorum very well, wash it off, and dry it with pieces of cloth. Initially, those pieces of cloth themselves would be a little dirty.

Even in our households, we have such cleaning cloths. It will of course be dirty. When we are clean, we don't like the even touch of it. That is how dirty it is! Wiping up a dirty place with a thoroughly clean cloth will make that cloth become dirty too. That is why we designate such a dirty cloth for doing the wiping. Though we wipe places such as the floor where we walk over with this cloth, when we clean the planks that we sit on, we don't use such a dirty cloth, but use a little cleaner one. When we clean the idols of deities, we certainly wouldn't use these 'old rags' to wipe them. We will first dry it with a somewhat clean cloth and then dry it up with another clean and dry cloth.

In Thirupathi, they not only kept the idol so clean, but also the floor in the sanctum sanctorum. They would start with rough, heavy, old pieces of cloth and keep continuing with lighter and finer materials. In the end, they would wipe up with this *Ravai Salla*. Even if there is a little bit of dirt or grime, that material would immediately reveal it. They would keep on repeating the process until the *Ravai Salla* comes out absolutely clear. That was the royal order. They had employed a 'an official' just to inspect this process and make sure that the cloth came out absolutely clean. Just as they did for the idol in the sanctum sanctorum, they made sure the entire sanctum sanctorum was equally clean.

If it were wiped and dried with the *Ravai Salla* in the very beginning, the cloth itself would shred. All the water must be dried with the heavy 'cloth,' and even the dirt and grime should be mostly wiped up by this, and then only go on to the *Ravai Salla*.

Meditating on the principle of Adhvaitha *Āthmā* and engaging in self-inquiry is analogous to wiping up the mind with this bright white and fine *Ravai Salla*. Currently, our mind is so degraded, stuck with the grime of desire, and rough and rugged like a stone floor. If this is wiped with the meditation *salla*, this won't get purified and at the same time the *salla* would get torn up as well. We must start with only the heavy cloth. This is why we start with the indulgences of the family life (*gruhasthāśrama*) that are obtained through the *indhriyās*. Nevertheless, just as the rough cloth gets out the old dirt also, the *śāsthrās* stipulate constraints in this too, in order to remove old *karmās*. It specifies so many ritualistic *karmās* with religious connotations. Performing numerous such *karmās*, we must wipe the *karmās* of so many births. Only after that could we go on to the meditative inquiry. Doing it at the very beginning instead is only tantamount to deceiving ourselves.

Even so, the one who does the initial wiping with the heavy cloth would be mindful of the final inspection by official. He would want to pass the *Ravai Salla* inspection and, motivated by this, he would be scrubbing so hard. Similarly, even while performing all the *karmās* through mind, speech, and body stipulated by the *śāsthrās* for each *varña* and *āśramā* for removing the dirt of *karmā*, we should be doing these with a constant reminder in the background. We should always think, 'The culmination of all these is really the Self-Realization, which is beyond the realm of the mind, speech, and the world of actions. All that we are doing now is only for the purpose of leading us to the stage of meditative self-inquiry.'

When we wash a utensil, of course we rinse with just clean water in the end to remove all the remnants of the tamarind, soil, etc. In addition to this, even at the very beginning, we do add a little clear water to the soil and tamarind to make a paste of it for the initial scrubbing, don't we? Similarly, even at the beginning stages of performing *karmā* through the mind and *indhriyās*, we must sprinkle a little bit of the clear water of spiritual thoughts on these. Right from the beginning, we should set aside a small amount of time for self-inquiry amidst all our *karmā*.

Whatever it is that we scrub and clean, be it a jug, a floor, or an idol, though we seem to work so hard scrubbing and cleaning it, we don't really create it anew. We don't transform it to anything else. It remains the same as it has always been. All we did was, remove whatever materials that got deposited on it, the ones that shouldn't have been deposited. The same is true of all the *sādhanās* that we undertake; they are only undertaken to bring out *Āthmā* in its true, innate state and shine. Numerous actions seem to be necessary to remove the mind, which is a creation of *Māyā*, that is overlaid on this *Āthmā* and is hiding it. When I refer to the mind, I am clumping *Anthahkarañа*, speech and body all together. Similarly, when I say action, I am including the thoughts too, which are the actions of the mind.

To Avoid Mixing Up the Bad With the Good

It is to get rid of the bad actions and the bad thoughts of Kāma and *krōdha* (desires and anger) that we do all the *sath karmās* appropriate to each *varña* and *āśramā* according to the *śāsthric* injunctions. We also develop the noble qualities of love, service to others, *bhakthi*, humility, and so on, for the same purpose. The bad deeds, or *asath vruththis* are the same *asura guñās* of the *dēvāsura* war that I was talking about in the beginning. Good deeds, or *sath vruththis*, are the *dēva guñās*. In this war, even *dēvās* develop some *asura guñās* (characteristics) from time to time. Several stories in the *Purāñās* talk about some bad elements getting mixed up even within the good. Some such examples are: the *dēvās* getting angry at the *asurās*, sometimes winning over them even by using devious tactics, developing a desire, competing with the *asurās* for acquiring exalted entities such as the nectar and Lakshmi, etc. We might say that the very purpose of these *puranic* stories is to show that the ultimate *sathya* transcends even the good.

The Upanishad mentions one of the most harmful *asuric* tendencies that *dēvās* had acquired. After their victory over the *asūrās*, the *dēvās* seemed to have felt proud, thinking, 'We won them over, using our might,' instead of realizing, 'We won them over, only due to His *krupa* and the power that the *Paramāthmā* has granted us.' This is narrated in *Kēnōpanishad*. Similar wrongs could be committed while doing our own *sath karmās* and *upāsanās*. We might feel proud, thinking, 'We achieved it ourselves,' forgetting the fact that His grace is the sole reason for our achievements. That is why, to avoid acquiring such attributes and protecting ourselves from it, we should be conscious of the *adhvaithic* state, which is beyond the bad as well as the good, right from the start. We should retain at least a little bit of the following thought: 'None of these things that we are doing are for the real us; we have somehow got entrapped in a guise, let it be that of a king, or that of a pauper. Even if it is a king's guise, we would have to take down the crown, ear rings, and the yellow garment, etc. Similarly, if it is that of a pauper, we do have to take down the fake beard, matted lock, etc.' If we do this, when we assume a virtuous guise within this fake guise, we can prevent the bad from coming in and getting mixed up. When we are aware that none of these should stay forever with us, even when we assume a good role, that is, donning the guise of *dēvās*, we wouldn't make any attempt to hold on to it firmly forever. It is only because of such a strong desire to remain as *dēvās*, the *dēvās* of the *Purāṇās* went astray in the wrong path every now and then. If only we are aware that everything is just a false guise and not our true 'I,' there is no room for our developing the pride of '*ahambhāvam*' (ego) that the *dēvās* had developed.

One of the meanings of '*ahambhāvam*' is, 'to realize who I am.' As long as we nurture the thought of, 'We simply don't know what it is. The *karmā* has deposited on it like dust preventing us from seeing it. We are going through all these efforts only to wipe it off,' how would pride and *ahambhāva* get generated? Spiritual thoughts are essential for not feeling the *ahambhāva* in the very *sādhanā* that we do for removing this *ahankāra* from the mind. Since this is not very easy to accomplish during the beginning steps, *Īśwara bhakthi* is indeed the big help and support that we now have for getting rid of the *ahambhāva*, cultivating *sath guṇa*, and performing *sath karmā*. Though the *Karma* mārga purifies the *Jīvā*'s mind by prescribing several *sath* actions, keeping the mind from running astray, only *Īśwara bhakthi* remains the fundamental support for that mind to grow with love.

Various Names of Love

Bhakthi is nothing but the love towards *Īśwarā*.

Love has various names depending on where it is directed towards. The love toward people of the same age is called friendship or *snēhitham*. The love towards elders is respect or *mariyātha*; towards a child, *vātasālyā*. Between a hero and a heroine, it is romance (*srungaram*). The love that the ordinary folk like us show towards people who are less fortunate than us and towards those who are going through some suffering is called compassion. When exalted elders show it towards us, it is called grace, *krupa*, etc. The grace of the great *Mahāns* does not simply stop with providing consolation with compassion, but they also have the power to even remove the misfortune and hardship. The pinnacle of this is the compassionate love that *Īśwarā* bestows on us. We call it the Supreme Grace or *anugraha*. The highest form of love that we show towards that *Īśwarā* is, of course, *bhakthi*.

Bhakthi - Definition of Love

What is love? It is when our mind mixes with another mind.

What is the ultimate state? The mind should just dissolve into *Āthmā*. What is the connection between such dissolving into *Āthmā* and the mixing with another mind in love?

Mixing is the stage that just precedes dissolving. We must first add sugar to milk and mix it. Then only it would dissolve. When there are two distinct substances, first they mix together. Then only one dissolves into another and when the dissolution is complete, there won't be two things, but only one. This is called '*aikyam,*' or unification. Attaining the state of '*ēkam*' (one) is called '*aikyam.*' When sugar is mixed with milk, the milk and the sugar would still be two distinct entities. 'Mixture' is possible only where there are two different things. It doesn't necessarily have to result in an *adhvaithic* dissolution. It can just stop with the *dhvaithic* mixture. The priest mixes the '*akshadha*' (special mixture of rice and turmeric) and sesame seeds. In that mixture, one doesn't dissolve into another and become '*aikyam.*'

We already saw that *Āthmā* is an entity that is without any association with anything else, but it is an independent, singular, and solitary entity. So it is not feasible to take this mind and mix with it. The mind can't go anywhere near *Āthmā*. Then how is it possible to mix this with that? It is at this juncture that we consider *Īswarā*, who is available for such a mixing as that *Āthmā* and do *bhakthi* towards Him. It is here that we refer to *Paramāthmā* and *Jīvāthmā* in *dhvaithic* mode. We saw that *Jīvāthmā* is the small mind and *Paramāthmā* is the large mind. The small mind can't mix with the totally disconnected *Āthmā*, but it can mix with the large mind that created it in the first place. Since it was created by that, just as a child mixes with the mother in love, it can also mix with that in the same way. That *Paramāthmā* will also mix with the *Jīvāthmā* in love just like that mother, and grant His blessings, or, shall we say, It will grant Its blessings. Becoming a *bhaktha*, *Jīvāthmā* mixes in love with *Paramāthmā*, who is *Īswarā*. After the mixing of the two, *Īswarā* grants the dissolution into the 'no-two' state. After that, without the distinctions of *Jīvāthmā* and *Paramāthmā*, it becomes simply *Āthmā*.

Adhvaitha Mukthi Through Bhakthi

Bhagawān makes a crystal clear statement in *Gītā* (18-55).

> *'bhakthyā māmabhijānāthi yāvānyāschasmi thathvatha:*
> *thathōmām thaththvathō jnāthvā visathē thadh anantharam '*

He says, 'Through *bhakthi*, one comes to know my true state as who I am and what I am like. After that, with that true knowledge, he enters within me.' He says '*anantharam visathē*.' '*Visathē*' means, 'He enters.' '*Anantharam*' means, 'without *antharam*.' '*Antharam*' means gap. We say, 'hanging in *antharam*,' don't we? So '*Anantharan Visathē*' 'with no gap between the *Paramāthmā* and the *Jīvāthmā*, he enters inside so as to become one with Him.'

One doesn't really go inside *Āthmā*, which is the true form of *Īswarā*, in *bhakthi*. By means of *bhakthi*, or using that as the pathway, he goes onto that state. In the state of *bhakthi*, where one is still separate, the ultimate goal is not attained with a simple Dhvaitha *mōkshā*. After that - '*thathō*' means 'after that' -the ultimate *mōkshā* results, where he goes into Him in *adhvaithic* mode.

When writing his *bhāshya* for this, *Āchāryā* explains the term '*Yāvān*,' which means 'what is *Bhagawān* like' as follows. The *bhaktha* comes to know what *Bhagawān* is like. *Āchāryā* says that one first recognizes *Paramāthmā* as the cause of the *jagath* and the conductor of the *jagath* as well, which is a *dhvaithic* form in his *bhakthi* mode. He says that the *bhaktha* first recognizes Him, who is *'upādhi krutha visthara bhēdha.'* That is, he first recognizes Him as the way in which He is differentiated into so many different forms in the universe that contains various entities limited by the various attributes (*guñās*) and *karmā*. He adds that the *Jīvā* then figures out that the one single undifferentiated consciousness must be the cause of all these differentiations. *'Adhvaitham, chaithanya māthra ēka rasa.'* This explanation sounds as follows: though the mind of the *Jīvā* goes to the super mind with a differentiated attitude and sees it as different, *Īśwarā*, the super mind, removes this feeling of differentiation.

The explanation that just 'sounds' like that here, is revealed crystal clear by *Bhagawān* in the next *slōkā* as, *'math prasādhāth avāpnōthi sāsvatham padham avyayam'* : He says, 'Through my blessing, one attains the everlasting, never-changing state.' That state is the Adhvaitha *mōkshā*. If one approaches the *Saguña* Brahmam and does the *dhvaithic*, loving *bhakthi*, it follows that through its grace, he attains *aikyam* into the *nirguña* Brahmam. Isn't that (*Īśwarā*, the *Saguña* Brahman) the causal matter that made the *Jīvā* appear different? Therefore, it also destroys that differentiation by Itself and makes them into one.

Here, *Bhagawān* reveals Himself as the *Paramāthmā*. Four or five *slōkās* later, He says that the *Paramāthma śakthi* resides in the heart of all the living beings and controls them through *Māyā* as a puppet show conductor controls the puppets by pulling their strings. He calls this *Paramāthma śakthi* as *Īśwarā*. Then, in the next *slōkā*, He says that the everlasting, supremely peaceful state will materialize through *Īśwarā's* grace. That state is *mōkshā*. *Mōkshā* is the only state that is everlasting and peaceful. He says, 'Collect all the pāpa*s* committed by the mind and the *indhriyās* and submit them to *Īśwarā*. That is, simply drop the small mind in front of the super mind in total dedication. You will then attain the everlasting, peaceful *mōkshā* as His benediction.

'thamēva śaranam gachcha sarva bhāvēna bhāratha
thath prasādhāth parām Sānthim sthānam prāpsyasi śāśvatham'

The mind of the *Jīvā* gets purified through the *Karma* mārga. Then it follows the *bhakthi* mārga and directs its love towards the super mind, which is its fundamental cause. Then through the supreme grace, it enters *jnāna mārga* and attains the realization of *Āthmā*, which is its fundamental root. Though it 'attains,' there is no separate mind that attains it, nor is there a separate *Āthmā* that is being attained. The mind that pieced the vast (*akhanda*) expanse of *Āthmā* into the finite entity of a *Jīvā* totally disappears. Then the feeling of the vast expanse remaining by itself comes back. The identification of this little finite piece with 'self' must go. That is, the mind has to be taught to lose itself gradually.

Bhakthi -Love's Necessity

When the mind that broke off into a piece and was thinking only about itself, starts to think about mixing with another one, it begins to lose its individuality or the separate *ahankāra*. Such mixing of minds is love. When it feels love towards any living being, it also departs somewhat from its self-centered actions and the fostering of its own little individual self, and starts to act on behalf of the object of its love.

The important thing is, this act should not provide any gain whatsoever to its own mind. When self-gain comes into the picture, it would only mean fostering one's own self and consolidating it. Such love towards some one else is not love at all. It is only desire, or Kāma.

All sorts of love that would result in some *pleasurable* gain to our mind and contribute to fattening it further because of its enjoyment, do belong to the category of Kāma, not love.

Love is whatever that aids in the loosening of the mind's corpulence and then softens it to be conducive for completely dissolving away.

Before something completely disappears, it must gradually become lighter and lighter, and more spread out. That is, it should keep expanding its form. Only then does it dissolve and disappear into the vast expanse, totally losing its form. I had given the example of an iron pellet earlier. Another example is water. Only when it evaporates and becomes light does it keep drifting out and disappear. Such lightening and spreading out of the mind is called love. What happens in Kāma (desire)? Instead of becoming light and spreading out in the evaporated form, it gets further solidified, like a block of ice. At least ice has a tendency to melt. The mind under the spell of desire becomes unmeltable, solid ice. This is what some of the elders meant when they said, 'Even the stone might melt, but this doesn't seem to melt at all.'

This love that provides the ability to the mind to attain the softeness to be dissolved and the lightness to be able to spread out, is better off targeted toward *Īswarā* than towards other living beings. That is very essential. Because, when you move with the other life forms with love, there is a risk of its turning into desire. When it moves with people like us, the mind tends to want some happiness as a self-gain from them in some form or the other. We might even do sacrifices for them. But even in this sacrifice, the desire to be recognized for it comes up. If not recognized like that, we get irritated and sad, thinking they are ungrateful. All these are only contributing to the fattening of the mind. There is another problem. Instead of our uplifting them, or their uplifting us, we might end up downgrading them or vice versa. There is yet another problem. When our mind goes beyond the boundaries of our own interest and reaches out to some one else, instead of expanding this boundary and embracing the entire set of living beings, it might stop with just that other person. The 'me-only' might simply expand only up to 'him-only' and again be confined within another small boundary and get consolidated right there. In that case, when the intention of wanting to do good to some one intensifies, we might even venture into harming some one else just because of this impulse. When we recommend some one who is not quite qualified for a job just out of love, we deprive some other qualified person of that job. When directing our love towards other living beings, there is room for such flaws to be accumulated.

Only when we place this love on *Īśwarā*, is it possible for our mind to ripen, lighten, soften, and enlarge in such a way as to help it get dissolved. This is the significance of His grace. *Bhagawān* talks about this supreme grace as '*math prasādhāth*' and '*thath prasādhāth.*' This *prasādham* of grace completely lightens a mind that places its love on Him and makes it lose itself into His *nirguṇa swarūpa* (attribute-less form). The specialty of this benevolent grace is that it doesn't lead to a void after losing the mind, but it blesses the *Jīvā* to attain the wholeness of the *nirguṇa* Brahman.

Case of the Self-Realized

Īśwarā doesn't have to explicitly show that He is giving that state and *Jīvā* is receiving that state. Without showing this, He might just grant that the mind of the *Jīvā* be soaked in self-inquiry after he attains sufficient maturity. Then, in the end, He might make the *Āthmā* show itself in a flash and, just as lightning snatches away the sight of the eyes that look straight at it, He will snatch away the mind and show Himself to it as to how He exists as a solitary entity.

Several *Mahāns* who had attained enlightenment were just engaged in self-inquiry and were constantly contemplating the supreme states that are depicted in the great verses that talk about the non-distinction between the *Jīvā* and Brahmam. Directly from this inquiry and contemplating states, they have attained the experience of the Brahmam, which is beyond the reach of the mind. So *Īśwarā* not only plays hide and seek in the *jagath*, but He also hides Himself, even while granting *mukthi*.

'Hiding Himself' refers to the hiding of the *Saguṅa*, which we think of as *Īśwarā*. We saw that even this is not His true 'I' and even below this level, He exists as the *nirguṅa Āthmā*. Therefore, when we say that the experience of *Āthmā* keeps closing in on the *Jīvā* and just encloses him within Itself and unifies it, it is not quite appropriate to say that *Īśwarā* hides Himself. It only means that He tightly constricts and buries that *Jīvā* within His true form.

As I have reiterated so many times, from our point of view, *Īśwara prasāda* is granted in a hidden way because we do not want the feel of Dhvaitha in *jnāna mārga*.

Just like taking off the guise of a *Jīvā*, He removes His own *Īśwarā* guise, and blesses abstractly and renders the two to be one in the non-dual Brahmam.

This is why several Self-Realized souls explain their attainment of *jnānā* as, 'We were performing *sādhanā* in *jnāna mārga* like this and that. All of a sudden, the mind stopped one day and Self-Realization occurred.'

You might ask me, 'You just said that it is really that *Īśwarā* who leads one in in *jnāna mārga* and then grants *siddhi*. But this so-and-so and that so-and-so who have attained Self-Realization and shared that experience haven't mentioned like that. How come?' This is my answer. *Īśwarā* doesn't show Himself as, 'I am the *Īśwarā*' and displays Himself in *Saguṅa* mode and then hand over some packet saying, 'Here, take this *jnānā*.' He has mostly hidden His *Saguṅa* form and only abstractly granted this to most *Mahāns*.

To some others, however, He has come down directly as a *jnānōpadēśa* guru (guru who instructs *jnānā*) and explicitly leads them into *jnānā*. To those who were worshipping Him with great *bhakthi*, He has all of a sudden showered the experience of Adhvaitha in a manner, it is known that He does it.

Such details have been revealed quite explicitly in *Aruṅagirināthar's* Kandhar Anubhūthi:

He says, 'That thief said 'just stay put!' Immediately, all the external substances vanished away! Oh, my goodness! What a wonder!'

He says this to explain the *adhvaithic* experience that was given to him by snatching away the entire *dhvaithic* entities, including his *Jīvā* mode, by none other than the thief who stole *Valli (Subrahmaṅya)*. Even more explicitly, he says in another context, 'It swallowed me who is myself and stood as itself, the supreme'

Manicka Vachagar says he was made *'Śivam'* and grace bestoned on him in order to explain that *Īśwarā* absorbed him, too, in His *nirguṅa Śiva swarūpa*.

He says, he was made *'Śvam'* In order to explain that *Īśwarā* absorbed him too in His Virguṅa *Śiva swarūpa*, he says he was made *Śivam* and grace bestowed on him. '*Śiva*' is *Saguṅa Īśwarā*. '*Śivam*' is *nirguṅa* Brahmam. No one can become *Īśwarā*. One can only become Brahmam. We have already seen this.

In another context in *Thiruvāchakam*, *Mānicka Vāchakar* calls out *Paramēśwarā*, makes him stand in front of him, and asks Him, 'Who is smarter, between the two of us? In bargaining to trade each of us to one another, and did just that, who came out to be the smart one? You took me, who was an insignificant nobody, and gave Yourself, who is the unending blissful form, to me! Now, tell me who is smart?' He is only referring to the gift of experiencing the vast expanse in a light-hearted manner, as a joke. *Aruṅagiriṅathar* called Him a thief. Manicka Vachagar calls Him a simpleton, a fool!

Nammāzhvār also talks about this experience in the same manner. After the *Paramāthmā* becomes *Jīvāthmā* in this manner. It gives Itself to the *Jīvāthmā* and absorbs it as Itself:

While completely going off in the *adhvaithic* mode in the concluding verses of *Thiruvāymozhi*, he says, 'When a small drop of water falls on a red hot iron, it pulls it all in with a 'srrr' sound. Just like that, you have sucked me into yourself.

Mūkar, who composed the *Pancha Śathī* on *Kāmākshī* makes a similar statement. For those who surrender themselves at the feet of a guru, *Ambāḻ*, with infinite grace, sets up the steps not only for *Saguña upāsanā*, but also for *nirguña upāsanā*, and makes them step up and stand on the balcony of *mōkshā*.

> *'Sathkrutha- dhēśika- charañā;*
> *sabhīja - nirbhīja-yōga -niśrēñyā*
> *aparvaga - saudha - valabīm ārōhanth -*
> *yamba kē(a) pi thava krupayā'*

In another place, he says that if only you get the blessing from Her benevolent eyes, what a wonder it is! Such people acquire absolute *adhvaithic* neutrality, seeing no difference between home and forest, friend and foe, a young woman's lips and a piece of tile.

> *'Śiva Śiva paśyanthi samam*
> *Śrī Kāmākshī katākshithā: purushā:*
> *Vipinam bhāvanān amithram mithram*
> *lōshtam cha yuvathi bimbōshtam '*

We saw that *Śēkkikzhār* also made a similar mention about the equanimity of the *Śiva bhakthās*. But we saw that they found fulfillment in just doing *bhakthi*, rejecting the Adhvaitha *mōkshā*.

Appaiya *Dīkshithar*, who philosophized that Adhvaitha is true *mōkshā*, said while singing the praise of *Paramēśwarā*, 'Oh, it is just enough to pick a couple of *erukkam* (yercum) flowers and *thumbai* flowers and drop them on you. As a reward, we are able to acquire the empire of *mōkshā*.' He says attaining *mukthi* is so easy by just doing *bhakthi*, which begets you *mukthi* through the *Īśwara prasāda*.

Samartha Rāmadās Swamījī says that *Rāmachandra Mūrthi* Himself grants the experience of Adhvaitha.

In this manner, each *adhvaithi*, who had his own Ishta *dēvatā* (favorite deity), has said that their *dēvathā* granted the Adhvaitha *jnāna siddhi*.

Āchāryā, who had worshipped all the *dēvatās* with the same *adhvaithic* vision, never failed to mention at least in one place within his *sthōthrā* composed for that *dēvatā* that each of these *dēvatās* grants such a blessing.

You might ask, 'All right, you mentioned some *adhvaithis* who were also doing *bhakthi upāsanā*. You said a lot about how every one should do *bhakthi*, and *karmā* too, and only then move on to *jnāna mārga* and do the *adhvaithic* inquiry. But reviewing the life of most *jnānis*, they didn't seem to have done any *bhakthi upāsanā* or observance of *karmā*, but seem to have done only *jnāna sādhanā*, right from the beginning. Still others seem to have been engaged in the normal worldly life like most ordinary people and all of a sudden developed an attraction towards Adhvaitha and went straight to the path of *jnānā*. What do you say about these?'

All these belong to the category of 'start from where left off.' That is, at whatever point they left off in the previous birth, they start off right there in this birth. They would have already performed enormous *karmā* and *bhakthi* in the previous births and would have attained mental purity and singular focus. Even among these, a few might have still had unexhausted worldly desires. So they might have spent these out in this *janmā* by engaging in worldly experiences up until a certain age. After that, when all the negative impressions have been exhausted, just as the sun emerges out of the clouds and shines, they would have had a sudden enlightenment.

There are some who might have progressed a lot in the spiritual path, but met their end before exhausting all the *karmās*. *Bhagawān* refers to them as '*Yōgā brashtas.*' (*Gītā*, sixth chapter) He says that they just start off in the next birth where they left off and continue their *sādhanā*.

Only among such people are there some who had no need to do *karmā* or *bhakthi* (since they had already done theirs in previous births). They are capable of going directly to *jnānā* or subject to sudden possession of *jnānā*.

Our Path

For ordinary people like us, only *nishkāmya karmā* and *bhakthi* earn us the qualification for *jnāna mārga*. Even while doing these *sath karmās* and *bhakthi upāsanās*, we should not do them just for the satisfaction derived from it. We should always keep in mind that these are only the steps that eventually lead to the goal of Adhvaitha, which is the highest level of the single truth, higher than even other eternally happy and peaceful truths.

Currently, we have lost our discipline, and are enormously puffed up with the worldly experiences. First, we need to perform the worldly actions with discipline and scrub and wash off all this puffiness. Then only, we should proceed towards *Āthmā* who is beyond this world. In other words, we should go in the *dharma* mārga first and then only attempt to reach Brahmam. Dharma is practiced only through *sath karmā*. That is why the *karmās* that have been designated to various groups of people after ascertaining their level of maturity and their earned rights, are called *swadharmā*, as opposed to *swakarmā*.

One can have a feast only after getting over an illness. Similarly, the feast of amrutha, which is the bliss of *Āthmā*, can be had only after getting rid of the diseases of *karmā* and the mind. (When I say disease of the mind, I don't mean mental illnesses such as confusion and hallucinations. I mean the mind itself as a disease appearing in *Āthmā*.)

These diseases of *karmā* and the mind have to be got over by means of the dharma *karmās* and *bhakthi* upāsanās. Dharma *karmās* are performed by the numerous physical tasks mixed in with the high, noble mental virtues. *Bhakthi upāsanās* involve less physical work and more predominance of the mind's noble virtues. In the beginning, since the body consciousness is dominant, importance is given to *karmā*. Later on, *bhakthi* gains more predominance. Only after that, comes the transition toward the stage where self-inquiry is predominant.

Connection to Other Paths: None Should Be Condensed

Though *karmā* is very important in the beginning, the other aspects should also be present as subsidiaries. Among these, *bhakthi* should be given prominence. There should also be some limited level of rumination about *Āthmā*, contemplation on Adhvaitha, and reading books on the subject of spirituality.

Then, when *bhakthi* is predominant, there is no need to pay special attention to *karmā* and get overly involved with it. In the first stage, we had to consciously do *bhakthi upāsanā*, even forcing ourselves at times. We do not have to do the same thing with regard to *karmā*, now that *bhakthi* is predominant in the second stage. It is enough to simply do the *karmās* that are mandated by the *śāsthrās*. When we have transitioned from the body consciousness to the stage of more abstract and direct mind consciousness, there is no need to go back to putting a conscious and deliberate effort toward the involvement with observance of more concrete *karmās*. It is enough to perform well whatever comes along on its own and the unavoidable *karmās*.

However, even at this stage, we shouldn't just make an announcement as, 'I have given up *karmās* altogether.' Such announcement might cause confusion among people who are in the first stage, where *karmā* is important. Therefore, no such announcement must be done. *Bhagawān* has emphatically said that even a *jnāni* who has moved up from *karmā* and *bhakthi* shouldn't do that (3rd chapter). We should never forget this.

When one goes into *jnānā*, even beyond *bhakthi*, neither *karmā* nor *bhakthi* is necessary. Even this person who is progressing in *jnāna mārga* shouldn't denounce these other paths in general, as though they are not necessary for anybody. *Bhagawān* instructs here, 'You go ahead and give these up. However, don't do it in such a way that the others, who are not yet ready for it, would also give them up and struggle as a result of achieving neither! Just because you can run a race, don't make people think that the babies don't need walkers or a lame one doesn't need his crutches.'

As he goes higher and higher in the *jnāna sādhanā*, the *Jīvā's* own likes and dislikes would fade and the power of *Īswarā* itself would lead him along. At that stage, he might become even a *sanyāsi*, totally giving up *karmā* and *pūjā*. Alternatively, just like King Janaka, who remained a *jnāni* while running his kingdom, he could still be doing *karmās*. Or he might even be doing a lot of *bhakthi* towards *Īswarā* just like several elders who were *adhvaithis*.

Maturation of Sadhānā Comes On Its Own

We don't need to be asking questions such as, 'When should the importance be switched from *karmā* to *bhakthi*?' 'When should we move on to self-inquiry from *bhakthi*?' 'Until when do we do *pūjā* with the accompanying bell?' 'When is meditation?' 'At what point do we give up even this meditation?' etc. It is enough if we just start with a lot of *karmā*, accompanied with some *bhakthi upāsanā*, and a little bit of spiritual thoughts right now. As we keep doing this, the impressions of *karmā* would keep fading, and the purity of the mind would keep increasing. In this process, we would lose the attachment to whatever *sādhanās* and exercises that need to be given up gradually. We would also develop a taste for those *sādhanās* and exercises that need to increase, on our own, and would start following them with a natural inclination.

At the stage just before the ultimate experience, that is, after entering the *jnāna mārga*, when do we stop the actions such as listening to the *vedhic* verses that detail the distinction of the *Jīvā* and Brahmam, then mulling over it in the mind, and then reciting and meditating on them? After that, when do we receive the vision of *Āthmā*? *Āchāryā*'s answer to this question is applicable even to the initial stage of the observance of *karmās*,. He says, 'If you ask when the pounding of the grains of paddy should be stopped, what can I say? You simply have to keep on pounding until the bran or the husk comes off and the rice starts to come out of the paddy grains. Similarly, until Self-Realization occurs, the listening, reciting, meditation, etc. have to be followed. So without asking, 'When to stop,' all observances should be continued until the higher level is reached.

The Medicine of Dharma

Our primary task is to get rid of the disease of *karmā*. How would a disease go away? Only when you go to a doctor, and take medicine prescribed for it. Who is this doctor who could prescribe a medicine to cure the disease of *karmā* and prevent it from coming back again? He is none other than Manu. Manu encompasses each and every one of such people who have provided us with the *Dharma sāsthrās*. You can guess what the medicine that is prescribed by them is. That medicine is nothing but the *Dharma sāsthrās* that determine and designate our *karmās*. This is not some kind of a clever analogy that I am making up. Even in the *vēdhās*, *Thaithirīya* Samhitha in particular, it says, 'Whatever Manu says is *bhēshajam.*' '*Bhēshajam*' means medicine. (Those who are familiar with 'Sri Rudhram,' or '*Vishṅu Sahasranāmam,*' would be familiar with at least the word '*bhēshajam,*' if not its meaning.)

When a medicine is prescribed, they also specify diet restrictions. They would impose constraints, saying you shouldn't eat such and such, and even if you do it, it should be within such and such a limit. Similarly, *Dharma śāsthrās* also say that you shouldn't do such and such a thing; certain indulgences should be limited to a certain level. All such rules and prohibitions are there.

We follow the doctor's recommendations in order to improve our body, which is going to be destroyed some day anyway. We take bitter medicines and pungent decoctions, and we follow all the dietary restrictions. Similarly, we must follow the great elders' dharma *śāsthrā*, the medicine and restrictions prescribed for the improvement of our spirituality, with even more faith and *bhakthi*.

I had already mentioned that the observance of dharma *karmā* is like the sweet '*kūshmāṅda lēhyam*' and *Unāni* medicine that will start becoming likable as you keep practicing them.

Wrongful Accusation

If some one claims that Adhvaitha might give room for people in this world to go in the path of *adharma* because it says that dharma is also *Māyā* just like *adharma*, it is simply a nonsensical rant caused by a lack of proper understanding of the Adhvaitha *śāsthrās*.

Similarly, the following criticism is also an accusation stemming from ignorance. They say, 'The *adhvaithis* are asking us to give up *Īśwarā upāsanā* because they claim that there is no distinction between *Jīvāthmā* and *Paramāthmā*. This is causing real harm to *bhakthi*, and it is leading the majority of the people to lose track and suffer.'

It is true that the books of *śāsthrā* written in the great *adhvaithic* spirit, specifically to address those who qualify for *jnāna mārga*, lay out the path intended only for such adherents. These layouts are of course based on the principle of removing all *dhvaithic* elements such as *karmā* and *bhakthi* only for helping these adherents focus on Adhvaitha without distraction. However, when these great *adhvaithis* wrote books or performed actions to address all people in general, they have shown with absolute certainty that people must indeed start with observance of all the *swadharma karmās* and the worship of deities with various attributes.

The *bhāshyās* written by *Āchāryā* repeat over and over that only the highest level adherents have to follow *jnāna mārga* exclusively, but the other middle level and lower level adherents should always follow the observance of *karmās* and *Īśwarā upāsanā*, never giving them up.

Why do you think *adhvaithis* such as *Madhusūdhana* Saraswathi and Appaiya *Dīkshithar* have composed numerous works on *bhakthi* and people such as Gōvindha Dikshitar have performed a great number of yajna and *karmā* and have done numerous social welfare services? It was only to lead the way for ordinary people to observe *karmā* and *bhakthi*.

There are even some great *adhvaithis* who have written books explaining philosophies that accept the validity of several principles of the *dhvaithis* who denounce anything Adhvaitha at various appropriate stages. Taking this whole-hearted acceptance further, with a noble sympathy towards people who are ready for only that stage, they have written these books to enable them to be well-established in these doctrines.

The philosophies of *Sānkhya*, Pūrva *Mīmāmsā*, *Nyāya* (logic) *Śāsthrā*, etc. differ from Adhvaitha. Even *yōga śāsthrā* is not totally compatible to it. Yet, Vachaspathi Misra, who occupies a prominent place among all the framers of Adhvaitha *śāsthrās*, has written books that explain all these *śāsthrās*.

Vidhyāraṇyā is one who actually occupied the seat of the Adhvaitha *āchāryā*. He has written a book called *'Sarva Dharśana Sangraham.'* It contains the opinions of all different doctrines, including the atheistic one known as *'Lōkayatha.'* It could be called a digest for all traditions.

Even more intriguing than all these - you might even call this specially significant - are the various *bhāshyās* written by Appaiya *Dīkshithar* for Brahma Sūthra, each one written in accordance with the various non-*adhvaithic* philosophies such as *Mādhvās* Dhvaitha principle, *Rāmānujā's viśishtādhvaitha*, *Srikantācharyā* is *śaiva* principle, etc. Sanskrit scholars who want to learn these philosophies read only these *bhāshyās*, considering them the most authentic.

The *adhvaithis* who had given so much accommodation for Dhvaitha never acted with any indifference toward the progress of qualities such as love. Nor did they do anything to even loosen the hold of the observance of *karmā*, *bhakthi*, etc., leading to the degeneration of the majority of the worldly people's reverence for dharma.

How many *bhakthi sthōthrās* has *Āchāryā* composed. Is it possible to count the number of temple renovations and installation of *yanthras* that he had done during all his pilgrimages? Even today, in the mutts that are run under his name, we specially encourage and give discourses towards observance of *vedhic karmās*, *vēdhādhyayana* (recital), *pūjās*, temple *kumbhābhishēkam*, and supporting the people to adhere to *śāsthric* injunctions.

I am just giving this discourse of Adhvaitha so that we don't totally forget our goal. But if you get caught coming to me personally, don't I trouble you and insist, 'Do *sandhyāvandhana*, do *aupāsanā*, light a ghee lamp in *Ambāḻ's sannidhi*, pick out the thorns from corridors, dig up ponds, distribute *prasāda* in hospitals, and implement the handful-of-rice plan, and so on?' I am doing all these because *Āchāryā* has mandated such *dhvaithic* inconveniences in order to get rid of the *dhvaithic* troubles that we have already earned.

Dharma, Adharma and the Adhvaithi

Only the ignorant say, 'The doctrine that claims everything is *Māyā* will give the impression that even dharma is false and make people believe that they could behave in whatever way they please.' *Āchāryā* has never sanctioned the idea of democratizing the *Māyā* doctrine among common folks. Not only just *Āchāryā*, but none of the great *adhvaithic*, Self-Realized souls ever said or advocated *Māyā* doctrine to common folk in a way for them to construe it as a license to give up dharma and act whichever way they pleased.

They have insisted that though it is *Māyā*, only when it is truly dispelled will the distinction between dharma and *adharma*, good and bad, puṇya and *pāpa* cease. But this distinction is very much present as long as we are not released from *Māyā*. They have insisted, 'Do good; do puṇya; do observe dharma, etc.'

When you attain great *siddhi* in Hata *Yōgā* and make your body as hard as steel, you can ingest glass, nails, or even acid and digest it. But would you really ask a frail person or even a normal, healthy person to eat nails? When the mind lifts up from this state of *Jīvā* and settles firmly in *Āthmā* as steel, it can digest any level of *adharma* or *pāpa*. But it is not intended for normal, worldly people. Adhvaitha *sāsthrā* doesn't say that at all. It has kept these people only as patients who must take the dharma medicine, not as *Hata yōgi* who could eat a nail.

Jnāni and the Fruit of Actions

A *jnāni* is above both dharma and *adharma*, *pāpa*, and evil. Dharma encompasses puṅya, virtues, and all. A *jnāni* is one who has gone above all these. A level below the state of just being *Āthmā*, which is Dhvaitha, consist of all the dualities of darkness-brightness, pleasure-pain, good-bad, puṅya-*pāpa*, and dharma-*adharma*. None of these that come under the creation of *Māyā* would affect *Āthmā*. That is, they wouldn't affect the *jnāni* who has realized *Āthmā*.

This doesn't mean that he would purposefully contemplate an *adhārmic pāpa* or is capable of causing something bad to some one or would actually cause it. When does a *jnāni* have a purpose? *Bhagawān* has said that he has established himself like a staff in *Āthmā*, which is above intellect *('buddhē: parathasthu sa:')*. Therefore, he wouldn't use his intellect like us and purposefully contemplate anything. Only when there is a desire, a purpose will arise. A *jnāni*, whose mind has ceased, is bereft of *sankalpa* (desire) or *vikalpa* (differentiation). His state is called *nirvikalpa* (without any differentiation).

In the excess baggage of the old *karmā*, a certain amount is set aside to be experienced in this birth, called *prārabhdham*. His body is still remaining so that he could spend the rest of this *prārabhdham*. The part of the bundle of *karmās* called *sanchitha*, which contains his remnant *karmās* from previous births to be allocated for his future births, were all burnt up in his *jnāna agni* (the fire of his Self-Realization) with no more remnants. The *karmās* that he committed in this birth could accumulate under the name of *ākāmi*, which is to be allocated for future births. These were also burnt up into ashes in his *jnāna agni*. However, it is not possible for him to burn up the *prārabdha* that has been designated for this birth and has started working already. It is like an arrow shot out of a bow. It can't be stopped. The arrows that still remain in the quiver and not yet set on a bow can be simply thrown away, removing them from the shoulder. The newly ordered arrows could be sent back. This is how *jnāni* gets rid of the *sanchitha* and *ākāmi karmās*. But how can he stop the arrow that has been sent, pulling the chord? Similarly, the *prārabdha* that has already taken effect cannot be stopped. Therefore, his body is still there to exhaust its experiences. Only the results of whatever he had already contemplated on purpose and acted upon, will take place now. However, there is nothing new that he would now contemplate on purpose and act upon.

Even the effects of the *prārabdha* will appear only to our eyes, but he would not be affected by these at all. For instance, he might be afflicted by a terrible disease due to some *karmās* from previous births. Or, he might be subject to some scandalous infamy foisted on him by the people calling him a humbug. Yet, he wouldn't mind this disease nor the accusation. Even saying, 'He wouldn't mind,' as though he deliberately makes an attempt to do so, is not quite correct. These diseases and accusations wouldn't even be felt as anything significant by him in the first place.

This indifference is not limited to just negative things such as the disease or the accusation. Due to some of his good *karmās* from the previous births, if the *jnāni* enjoys great health, fame, being anointed by the *sishyās* (disciples) on a throne like an emperor and seated and honored with yellow garment, etc., these would be perceived by him equally as insignificant as well.

I just meant to point out that a *jnāni* doesn't desire anything, nor does he do anything deliberately. He is simply enjoying the *Āthmā* inside and has handed over his body at the disposal of the natural happenings in accordance with his *prārabdha karmā*.

There is another, different opinion regarding a *jnāni's prārabdha.*

Bhagawān says, *'jnānāgni: sarva karmāñi bhasmasāth kuruthē.'* (*Gītā* 4-37) There are some who claim that this statement which says, 'the *jnānāgni* will burn all *karmās* to ashes' includes *prārabdha karmā* as well in the phrase 'all *karmās.*' They feel that when *jnānā* arises, it entails total destruction of the mind and *karmā* but not any left over like *prārabdha karmā.* They ask, 'Just as darkness is dispelled when you light a lamp, the darkness of *Māyā* runs away in the brilliance of the rise of *jnānā.* There is no doubt about that. These *karmās* and the fruits of *karmās* are all only a part of the creation of this *Māyā,* aren't they? Then it doesn't make sense to say that *Māyā* goes away, but out of the three kinds of *karmās* of *prārabdham, sanchitham* and *ākāmi,* only two go away and the third remains.'

You might ask, 'It seems possible to retrieve even an already shot arrow before it hits the target, through the power of mantra! *Āthma jnānā,* which is far above the power of mantra, should be able to retrieve the arrow of *prārabdha,* shouldn't it?'

Āchāryā says the following in his *bhāshya* for this '*sarva karmā*' in the *Gītā* verse: this '*sarva karmā*' refers to all the *karmās* except *prārabdha,* which has already started giving its fruits. The same *Āchāryā* gives a different opinion in ten or fifteen *slōkās* in *Vivēka Chūdāmañi,* where he inquires into this aspect and gives commentary. There he gives the following verdict: only when at least a little bit of the *Āthma buddhi* is sticking onto the body is *prārabdha* effective. When the body and *Āthma buddhi* are destroyed altogether, no *prārabdha* exists thereafter. He mockingly says, 'For such a *jnāni, janmā* as well as *karmā,* all become a dream. He is one who has awakened into *jnānā.* To say that such a person has *prārabdha* is akin to saying that out of the sum that a person has earned in his dream, one portion alone is allotted to him after he wakes up.' He concludes this saying, 'It is usually said that he also has *prārabdha* in order to appease the ignorant ones who don't understand how a *jnāni* could still remain in the *dhvaithic* world.'

We can take it that he accepted the *prārabdha* explanation for a *jnāni* when he was talking in the context of *Gītā* because *Gītā* is something that adherents of all traditions read and he had to give an explanation that is satisfactory to all levels of common folk. However, since *Vivēka Chūdāmaṇī* is targeted towards people who have a special affinity for *jnānā*, he explained it as it is supposed to be in it. To those with this special affinity, he just left it to them to figure it out on their own, during their self-inquiry, while contemplating the question, 'Why should a *jnāni* still have the journey through his body? If it is not because of *prārabdha*, then what else is the reason?'

But I have now mentioned it to everybody. If I just tell you to figure it out on your own by becoming a *jnāni,* that would be wrong, wouldn't it? Am I not singing the same tune, asking you to first do a lot of *karmā* and *bhakthi* and then only move on to self-inquiry?

So let me try to give another kind of explanation as a compromise. After attaining *jnānā*, why should the *jnāni* still continue to maintain his body and lead some kind of life in this world - at least what appears to us to be so? I'll come up with an explanation for this.

Isn't it the *sāsthrā's* verdict that when one attains *jnānā*, he could simply remain forever in the bliss of *Āthmā* without any attachment whatsoever to pleasure or pain, gain or loss, that pertains to this world? If we need to find out whether it is true, it can be proved only if such a *jnāni* remains in this world and displays these traits, right? We might say that this is why *Īswarā* has retained this *jnāni* in this world. No matter how much fame comes along, that could all go to one's head or however much infamy comes that makes one hang his head in shame, no matter how good a health one has or afflicted by whatever terrible disease, whatever other pleasures or pain come by, taking all these unperturbed with equanimity and absolute peace is the state of *Āthmā*. If this has to be proved, isn't it only possible if there are such *jnānis* in this world as proof?

When we say that Adhvaitha *mōkshā* is attainable in this world itself and it doesn't differentiate between this and the other world, it would be acceptable only when a *jnāni* lives in this world and demonstrates it actually experiencing such a thing, wouldn't it? If his body ceases as soon as he attains *jnānā*, it would only affirm the notion that *jnānā* is not viable in this world - or that *jnānā* seems to recognize this world as something different, wouldn't it?

We can even give yet another reason. *Īśwarā* Himself keeps these *jnānis* as His instruments in this world and fulfils his intention through them. His intention is to create role models who practice the great virtues of life to do good to the people.

Just as spring keeps causing fertility and prosperity without any particular gain for itself, a *jnāni* also causes wellbeing in the world without any deliberate intention on his part.

Āchāryā says that he aids others cross over the *samsārā* with no selfish reason after he crossed it himself. Such existence of a *jnāni* for the sake of uplifting others is not due to his intention. Because he has absolutely no kinds of intention whatsoever. Then how come it happens like this? Because that is what *Īśwarā* intends!

Īśwarā sometimes makes a *jnāni* appear even as an ideal person to follow the life of dharma, the first part involved in crossing the *samsārā*. Janaka was like that. We saw that *Bhagawān* says that a *jnāni* demonstrates the dharmas well within the comprehension of the people.

Thus, when a *jnāni* doesn't have his own intentions or the mind that entertains these intentions, he never does anything or gives up anything consciously thinking of it as either dharma or *adharma*. When *Īśwarā* makes him perform actions as simply an instrument, he also makes him an ideal person for the sake of the worldly good, its spiritual uplifting, and its dharma. Therefore, whichever way you look at it, there is no room for a *jnāni* to do *adharma*, evil, or *pāpa*.

Therefore, the statement that a *jnāni* has no *dharma* or *adharma*, puñya or *pāpa*, or good or bad is only a statement on a more abstract, philosophic level. The interpretation that it gives room for a *jnāni* to actually do *adharma*, *pāpa*, or evil in practice is simply not correct. It would never mean that he would go in the wrong path externally, since none of this would attach to him inside.

Therefore, the accusation that the principle of Adhvaitha would give a handle to *adharma,* etc. and that it would make people take on the *adhārmic* path so easily, and so on, are only the result of misinterpretation of the books intended for the true *sadhākās,* when they are read by ordinary people who are not ready for exposure to these concepts yet.

Sometimes, we get into circumstances that pose a dilemma. At those junctures, one might have to end up resorting to doing something *adhārmic* to establish common dharma or good. It is precisely under these circumstances, since such *adharmas* wouldn't affect a *jnāni*, they are sometimes made use of to perform this *adharma* to establish a common good. During the *Mahābharatha* War, Krishña *Paramāthmā*, the great *jnāni*, performed several such acts and digested them. Based on such truly sporadic events, it is not at all fair to generalize and find fault with it and say that this might become a general rule even for people with a slight *adhvaithic* bent as opposed to just being confined to the *jnānis.*

Adhvaitha *śāsthrās* say that *adharma* should be got rid of first, and later on - only much much later - *dharma* should also be given up.

When did *Bhagawān* say, 'Sarva dharmān parithyajya...,' meaning, 'Surrender to me, giving up all the dharmas?' He said it only at the very end of *Gītā*. What did He say in the beginning? He started only from the other end. He chided Arjuna, who said, 'Let me take *sanyāsa*, giving up everything.' He called him, 'like a eunuch.' He kept insisting and ordering him only to do dharma and his *swadharmā*. Only after that did He give His sermon on *karmā-bhakthi-jnānā* with no omission. After letting him have a vision of His universal form (Vishw*arūpa Dharśanam*) and greatly elevating his mind, in that very high state, He said, 'Give up all the dharmas and surrender unto Me.'

This is exactly what the Adhvaitha *śāsthrās* recommend - only after preparing some one to be a rightful recipient at the highest level, ask him to give up the dharmas.

Even there, it should be properly understood as follows: it does not ask one to give up dharma in action; it is only asking one to give up the mind-set that performs these dharmas and *adharmas* with their ultimate fruits or effects in mind. Along with the doctors of Dharma *śāsthrā*, such as Manu, even the doctors of *Āthmā śāsthrā* such as our *Āchāryā* prescribe only the medicine of dharma to all the people who haven't quite reached the level of the highest recipient.

When writing the *bhāshya* for '*sarva dharman parithyajya,*' *Āchāryā* has clarified this very well and explained with tremendous grace, very mindful not to let the middle and lower level recipients misconstrue this, He says, '*Bhagawān* has only intended to advise giving up all actions here. Therefore, it should be understood that what He refers to as dharma is inclusive of *adharma*, as well.'

Having said this, he also establishes that it is very important for the majority of the people in the beginning stages to give up *adharma*, by quoting the *vēdhās* on this. Though it is sufficient for *Āchāryā* to say this, he considered it essential to cite the authority of *vēdhās* and quotes from *Katōpanishad*. He cites the following statement from it: 'One who hasn't given up wicked behavior does not reach *Āthmā* through the highest knowledge called *pra*jnāna.' He calls for giving up *adharma* citing this quotation. This is applicable to everyone in general.

Only after this, he quotes from *Mahābharatha* to buttress his advice to the highest recipients that they should give up dharma also along with *adharma*. (That is, they should give up the identification of the distinction between dharma and *adharma*.) He quotes from the *Sānthi* Parva of *Mahābharatha* that says, '*Thyaja* dharmam *adharmam cha*' as an authority for it. (Though *Mahābharatha* is elevated in its status as the fifth *vēdhā*, it comes only after the authority of the *vēdhās*.)

We shouldn't feel, 'Oh, great! Even *Bhagawān* has said, '*sarva dharman parithyajya*.' This is a great *upadēsā*! We are free to give up all the dharmas now,' and misinterpret this quotation. (Periyavā laughs, and the *sabha* laughs. The laughter lasts for a while.) *Adharma* should be given up first and then only we should move on to the part of giving up *dharma*.

This is a meticulous, step-by-step process. First comes the dispensation of *adharma*. This is followed by the observance of the dharmas as referred to in *karma Mīmāmsā* as '*athātho dharma jijnāsā*.' Then comes the stage of not thinking about the fruits or effects of dharma and *adharma*. The next stage is developing an affinity for realizing Brahmam and specified in *utthara Mīmāmsā* and following it up with the *sādhanā* in *Brahma jijnāsā*. That is, without it being a conscious effort, thinking, 'Mind you, I am doing dharma,' submitting this consciousness itself at His feet, dropping that very thought of dharma as a part of this. (We might call this the same underlying principle of *Bhagawān*'s words, 'Giving up all *dharmas*, surrender unto Me.') The ultimate stage is when we acquire a totally balanced view that recognizes no distinction between dharma and *adharma* and is completely non-dual. Finding fault with Adhvaitha and saying that it might harm dharma is only because of the fault of not understanding this step-by-step process.

First, move from *adharma* to dharma, then only from dharma to Brahmam. There is absolutely no doubt about this.

Watching these *jnānis*, or for that matter those others who start where they left off having a strong affinity to the *jnāna mārga*, if the others who don't have such affinity, or those who do have that affinity only at very few instances and stray off somewhere else, start settling down for the self-inquiry, which doesn't distinguish between dharma and *adharma*, will only be futile. It might even result in some untoward effects. If a worm tries to imitate birds that fly right after birth, how would that be? It first has to be a worm, then become a pupa, and then only become a wasp, a butterfly, or a mosquito, and fly. All of us cannot adopt the path of *sādhanā*, where stopping the mind with ease comes so naturally or through the practices of the previous births to a few people who have received such qualities.

I am inclined to over-stress this aspect a little more because these days, the discussions of *Vēdhānthā* have increased significantly and are followed by campaigns claiming all the *karmā* and rituals to be unnecessary. Among these advocates, there are a lot of speakers on *Vēdhānthā*, professors, those who have earned doctorate degrees, and those who have published books in foreign presses. However, if you search for some one in this group who might qualify to be called a *jnāni*, you seem to have to search forever. I am saying this with a great concern because they are preaching to others also and drawing straight to *Vēdhānthā* those who might otherwise be following some *śāsthrā*, tradition, and observance of *karmā* in this already deteriorating world with diminishing discipline. As though the danger to *Dharmika* and *Āthmīka* from the atheists is not enough, the additional danger coming from these *Vēdhānthā* advocates is even more unsettling. I am not saying all this to accuse them. I am only saying it to see if a fault could be averted.

Only dharma, the accompanying *karmā*, and the *bhakthi upāsanā* all together should take us to the stage of *dhyāna* (meditation) and then on to *jnānā*.

Dharma and Love

Though they transcend dharma and *adharma*, we have only seen the *jnānis* who have adhered to dharma and have never gone in the path of *adharma*. Similarly, though they have crossed the good as well as the bad as far as they are concerned, they have only remained ever so graceful, compassionate and sympathetic, appearing as though 'no one surpasses them in nobility' from the view of the world. *Bhagawān* talks about them as '*sarva būtha hithē rathā:*' -'taking delight in the welfare of all animals and people' - and '*suhrudham sarva bhūthānām jnathva mam*' -'those who know Me as the friend of all living beings.'

No one seems to surpass a *jnāni* in love, which is the best of all that are good. People like *Āchāryā* could have simply been aloof without doing anything for the salvation of the world and could have just spent all their life simply enjoying the bliss of *Āthmā* all by themselves thinking 'Love is only *dhvaithic*-that which is done towards another entity. This world is, of course, just *Māyā*. How does it matter whether there is dharma or *adharma*? What if the people in it do dharma, or for that matter get destroyed without doing it? Why should I feel any love or sympathy towards them? What help can I really give them? Help itself is *Māyā.*' Instead, they have put themselves through so much hardship for the people, moving around all over, and have given so much advice and instructions both orally as well as written, doing tremendous service.

This strikes down another false claim. Similar to the claim that Adhvaitha might cause the decline of affinity to dharma and the fear of *pāpa*, there is another false claim. This is the claim that only because of the *Māyā* doctrine of Adhvaitha have the Indians become good for nothing, losing the power of action. In the world of actions, the achievements of *Āchāryā* make it obvious how wrong this argument is.

Only after being well-soaked in dharma and love can we progress to the abode of *Āthmā*, which transcends dharma and *adharma* as well as love and hatred. Such transition is the essence of the *adhvathic* message.

When attaching an iron tyre to a wheel, it is usually heated up and then cooled down by pouring cold water over it in an alternate sequence in order to make it expand and contract, alternately. Only then would it make a strong bond to the wheel. Otherwise, it would develop slack and rattle loose. It should be heated and expanded, and then, pouring water, it should be cooled down and contracted. In the same manner, if a *Jīvā* has to reach the place of *Āthmā* and hold on to it strongly, his lower *guṇās* must be contracted with the various constraints of dharma and then the higher *guṇās* must be expanded by the expanse of love.

To achieve the action-less state, we must do a lot of different kinds of *karmās*, rituals, and social services. When some one complains that they can't get to sleep, what do we tell them? We say, 'Be very active. Run around and work hard. Sleep will overcome you automatically as though you are beaten unconscious,' don't we? This is meant only for the physical rest. *Karmā* helps in a similar manner for the Āthmic rest also.

Similarly, to get rid of all the outward feelings, we should cultivate love and then its advanced state of the feeling of *bhakthi* very well and then attain the states of being possessed, or ecstatic. Only when doing this, would it lead us to the great feeling of oneness. Without going through this, it is simply not possible to get rid of all the feelings in the beginning itself. Even if it was possible, it would only lead us into a numb, lifeless, dry kind of a state, but not into the solitary, great feeling. When so many different emotions keep rising up, is it really possible to knock them all down? Or, is it possible to just enlarge the one great feeling of love and let all other feelings get submerged into it?

When several people are engaged in a buzzing conversation, if we ask all of them to be silent, are they able to do it? They are not. After a minute or two one or two people might start up a hushed dialogue. Then all others will follow suit and after about ten minutes, this hush will really intensify again into a loud noise. Attempting to subdue all the feelings of the mind in one blow will also end up only like this. On the other hand, instead of repeating the plea of, 'Silence, please' -(laughter) keep on sounding, 'Silence, silence' -some one could just start shouting a name like '*Rāma Rāma*' or '*Śiva Śiva.*' Especially if it is recited as a nice *bhajana* with melody and beat, everybody would start repeating it and all other noises would be drowned in this sound of *nāmā*. Even for half an hour to an hour, or even all night, we are able to participate in it without carrying on other conversations, especially if it keeps changing, changing the *rāgā*, the rhythm, and the names. Of course, this is not silence. But we can call it the next best thing. Such engrossed absorption in the *nāmā* will lead to

Mouna (silence) on its own. Would a mere talk have that capability?

Just like this, among the various feelings, love could be expressed in various hues of *bhakthi* and could manifest itself in various forms. All the other feelings would get submerged only in this and eventually, it would settle down in just one such mode and lead to the final silence of Adhvaitha. Instead, directly blocking all the feelings of the mind is not really possible.

Love is Necessary for the Mind to Wither Away

Yōga sāsthrā is followed only for stopping the flow of the mind. It doesn't say anything, at least explicitly, about attaining *Brahmānandhā* or *Āthmānandhā* through it. Adherents of the path of *yōgā* define *mōkshā* in a different light as, 'It is enough to stay clear of the mind's gnawing demands. However, it shouldn't be a jada or *thamo* state such as sleep. It should be a state of *Purushā* (same as *Āthmā*) without any connection to the mind and remaining in a solitary *Samādhi*.' Though this is not quite like the void of Buddha's doctrine, they also do not talk about the *adhvaithi's sachithānandhā* (*sath-chith-ānandhā*) state of completeness. They instead talk of a life principle that is still remaining in the ruins of a withered mind.

Therefore, these people of the path of *yōgā* wouldn't have any objection to trying to subdue all the feelings completely right from the beginning and achieve a state of mind that is simply void. Yet, Pathajali (who wrote *Yōga Sūthra*) seems to have understood quite well that it is not possible to subdue all the feelings just like that. That is why he is recommending the cultivation of the feeling of love and calls it '*Prathipaksha bhāvanā*.'

He details several methods called *yama* and *niyama* in the *Yōga sāsthrā*, which is a list of 'don'ts' that help subdue the flow of the mind. Though he listed them and the *sadhākās* do make such attempts, he was well aware that the evil forces and evil thoughts keep pulling at them.

That is why he also had to stipulate that good feelings have to be cultivated in order to get rid of the bad feelings. They should attain the destruction of the mind only after that. He says that there are two kinds of feelings: ones that pull you deeper and deeper into the pleasures of the *indhriyās*, and the others that lift you up to the level of the supreme goal. He calls the lower level *guñās klishta vruththi*. *Klishtam* means that which generates *klēśam* (anguish). *Aklishtam* is that which causes the good instead of *klesa*. He says that the *vruththis* such as *kāma* and *krōdha* that arise as *klishta* cannot be subdued and destroyed just like that. They can be made to go away only through the *vruththis* of love, generosity, and purity, which are *aklishta*. Only after that, should these *vruththis* also be stopped to attain the stage of *samādhi*.

He says that unlike the ones that are *klishta*, the *aklishta vruththis* don't grab the *Jīvā* tight. After maturing fully, they would leave, giving room to the stage of *kaivalya samādhi*. He details how at the occurrence of each *klishta vruththi* it should be balanced by such-and-such *aklishta vruththi* and subdued.

Placing love as the prominent one in this, he details four classifications of it called *maithrī, karuñā, mudhithā* and *upēkshā* The friendliness extended towards one who is happy is called *maithrī*. That which is extended towards a person who is suffering is *karuñā*. That love which is full of happiness shown toward people who have highly noble character is *mudhithā*. Towards people with lowly character, though perhaps not possible to love them with no trace of hatred, to stay away from them is called *upēkshā*

Without Lofty Goals, Lofty Stages Do Not Materialize

We saw that the *aklishta vruththis*, unlike the *klishta vruththis*, do not drag some one in and bury them into themselves. Instead, they raise them up to a lofty stage where they are themselves got rid of. Similarly, only the actions that are motivated by personal desires erode the trench deeper for the *Jīvā* to be endlessly engaged in themselves. On the other hand, the *śāsthric karmās* that are performed without any attachment, aid the *jīvās* become conditioned for *jnānā* by giving them up eventually. In the same manner, the *Saguńa upāsanā* that is performed with *bhakthi* for *Īśwarā* in the Dhvaitha mode, leads the *Jīvā* to become one with Him in His *nirguńa* form, giving up those very *upāsanās*.

We can give an analogy for this. We can compare the evil powers that take a strong hold on us, to the company of miscreants who latch on to us for getting some of their selfish agenda achieved through us. The *dhārmic* actions, lofty virtues, and *Saguńa upāsanā* are similar to the policemen that we approach and seek help from, in that situation. The policemen will be in contact with us only until they are able to rectify our problem; then they will take leave of us after chasing the miscreants away or arresting them, right? Similarly, the aforementioned noble powers will take leave of us after they subdue the evil ones.

However, what our goal is and what goal we long for and strive for seem to matter a lot. *Īśwarā* grants only that goal which we desire with all our heart and that we don't lose our focus on. Most of the time, He doesn't appear to take us to loftier goals on His own. Why am I saying this? In our observation, as long as we consider the *dhārmic* actions, love, *Saguńa upsana* with *bhakthi*, and so on, as a goal in itself, they seem to stop right at that level. If some one doesn't have Adhvaitha as his goal, these activities don't seem to prop him up to the level of *jnānā*, which is above them.

Those who observe the *karmās* and *yajnās* with attachment to only these, seem to spend their entire life, even up to the eighties and the nineties, performing some *yajnās* such as *Vājapēyam, Adhirāthram, Abthōryamam*, etc. one after another; they don't move on to *bhakthi* and *jnāna sādhanās*. Even those who perform social service also spend their entire life getting involved in building a hospital there and establishing an orphanage here, and so on. Those who undertake pilgrimage are the same way as well. They feel, 'I haven't gone to Pushkar in Rājasthān yet, and I haven't been to *Kāmyakā* in Assam yet,' and they keep going to some place or the other. Those who do *Nāma Sankīrthanam* (singing the Lord's names) keep doing it till their last breath.

Even at the stage of a ripe old age, when all their faculties wind down and they become bedridden, they only lament, 'Oh, no! I couldn't perform *Vājapēyam*', 'I couldn't set up an orphanage in such-and-such a place', 'Oh, I have become bedridden before seeing Jammu *Vaishńāvī*', 'See how I have become an invalid, not even able to chant a few names!', and so on. It is very rare to see people who feel content that at least now, staying in one place, they could get down to doing self-inquiry, which doesn't require any external action or instruments.

We could give a reason or consolation for this as follows. In general, since a *Jīvā* has a lot of remnant *karmās*, it becomes impossible for him to exhaust them all in one birth. That is why they have to keep following some Dhvaitha *sādhanā* that they have undertaken. They will continue in the next birth from where they left off in this birth and arrive at Adhvaitha just as a '*yōga brashta*'.

I just mentioned another point of view that occurred to me a little while ago. Take the case of those who don't have Adhvaitha as their goal, or for that matter, the case of those who develop an attachment to the Dhvaitha *sādhanās* that are only at the beginning stages and hence lost the focus of their final goal. Even in these cases, these very *sādhanās* seem to keep them down at their level without pushing them up to the level of Adhvaitha.

They say that several *Mahāns* who had advocated Dhvaitha *mōkshā* again re-incarnated as other *Mahāns*. No matter how many such re-incarnations they take, they have always advocated Dhvaitha. Why is that? It makes us wonder whether *Īswarā* Himself has designated this for them, thinking, 'I will grant it as you wish,' according to their conviction of 'We don't want Adhvaitha; our goal is only Dhvaitha.'

What would it be like if we start taking liberties with the policemen, developing affection for them because they had chased away the robbers? The situation of the people who develop attachment for the *sādhanās* that they had to follow in the intermediate stage for the sake of getting rid of the evils, is analogous to this. Those people, whose initial necessity is to get away from the very evil forces, lose track of the ultimate goal and follow the path of the *sādhanās* that they had used to get out of these evil forces.

In the war between the *dēvās* and the *asūrās*, the *asūrās* have to be got rid of first. That has to be accomplished using the *dēva śakthis*. But then, if we simply hang on to the *dēvās*, aren't they different from us too? They are not our *Āthmā*, are they? We only said that the *dēva śakthis* are the noble characteristics and the *asūra śakthis* are the evil characteristics. As long as it has some characteristic, it wouldn't be the *nirguṅa Āthmā*. *Guṅa* pertains to the mind, and this mind is different from *Āthmā*. Didn't we just see that all the afflictions of Dhvaitha are only because of this? Therefore, only when the noble *guṅās* also leave, can we attain the everlasting bliss of the Āthmic experience. In the *dēvā-asūra* war, it is not only enough to get rid of the *asūrās*. After that, even the *dēvās* will remain foreign to the *Āthma Sānthi* (peace). The word 'foreign' is not as harsh as 'foe', yet both of these have the same underlying principle. Therefore, ultimately there should be no foreign or external element. No final salvation is possible unless we let *Āthmā*, who is absolutely unaware of the concept of warfare, exist as a solitary entity.

When we say that the dēvā-*asūra* war is raging inside the *Jīvā*, who is this *Jīvā*? It is none other than the mind, which has the mode of a *Jīvā* -not *Āthmā*. We know that *Āthmā* cannot be affected by any struggle. The basis for this warfare, the *Jīvā*, has to cease; then only the Self-Realization will materialize. If a war is centered on an individual, it can cease conclusively only when that individual himself ceases to exist, right? So this dēvā-*asūra* war can conclude only when this individual called the mind ceases. *Bhagawān* tells us to win over the evil forces of *kāma*, *krōdha*, etc., at first. After this is accomplished, He doesn't ask us to just remain with this purified mind, or the mind with only the *dēva ṣakthis*. He concludes this instruction, asking us to imbed this mind into an even higher substance called *Āthmā* and cease it in the end.

Dēva Ṣakthis Afflict Too

We might latch on to the *dēva ṣakthis*, or as in the earlier analogy, to the policemen. Alternatively, the *ṣakthis* themselves might not let go of us and hold us back so that we don't move on up to *Āthmā*. We might in fact like their hold and comply with them. We might be infatuated by the power and pleasure that they give, and actually enjoy them and accept them. Some *dēva ṣakthis* that are not highly noble ones, but are at a mid-level or even at a much lower level, sometimes try to keep some one from getting away from their influence.

Many characteristics that fall under the category of human nature have the *asūra* and dēvā forms. What we call the external natural forces also have these *dēvāsura* forms. Among these, even a few which belong to the category of the *dēvās*, sometimes retain control of a *Jīvā*, preventing him from progressing to the state of

Āthmā, which transcends all characteristics, and get their desires fulfilled through him.

When a *sādhakā* develops some amazing powers called *siddhi* at some stage, sometimes he gets over-involved in these powers and forgets his quest for *Āthmā*. Such a phenomenon is only due to the control of these *śakthis*.

If we have an unshakable hold on *Īśwarā*, who is above all these, these *śakthis* can't carry out their mischief on us. We don't necessarily have to hold on to *Īśwarā*, thinking of His *Saguṅa* form. Even if we have our mind firmly focused on the ultimate goal of merging with *Āthmā*, *Īśwarā*, who does this merging for us, will see to it that we are not affected by the interference of the *asūrās* and the *dēvās* who might attempt to cause hurdles in the process. He will provide this protection with meticulous care.

The supreme *dēvatās* who have a significant level of *Īśwara śakthi* and are always immersed in their supreme, Self-Realized state, will never cause such hurdles for the fulfillment of a *Jīvā*'s goal of Self-Realization. Appaiyya *Dhīkshithar* has cited various reasons and ascertained that *Īśwarā*, *Ambāḷ*, and *Mahā Vishṅu* are three such gems. A few others such as *Piḻḻaiyār*, *Subrahmanya Swāmi*, Lakshmi, and Saraswathi, as well as *avathārās* such as *Rāmā* and *Krishṅā* are also such deities.

Grace of God According to Desired Goal

However, two things should be kept in mind without fail: First, even *dēvatās* such as Iruḻan, Vīran, *Kātteri*, and so on, could be simply considered as *Paramāthmā* or *Īśwarā*, as opposed to thinking of them as some forms possessed with some limited powers. If they are worshipped, thinking of them as a form of *Paramāthmā*, then *Paramāthmā*, who is an indweller within them, will bestow His grace. He will make sure that they can't produce hurdles in the form of Irulan, *Kātteri*, etc. He will bestow the highest *jnānā*.

Second is the other end of the spectrum. If we insist on worshipping *Īswarā* or *Paramāthmā* with the feeling, 'He appears different from us; let Him be; the bliss that He provides in this state is more than enough; I don't need Adhvaitha,' *Īswarā* might actually grant just that without giving the *jnānā*. He might think, 'As you wish! Just remain in Dhvaitha.' Most of the examples seem to imply only this.

I must divide this up even further. Some people might be full of *bhakthi* and be quite content in doing just *bhakthi*. They might either be ignorant of Adhvaitha or simply not be particularly concerned about wanting to attain it. However, they might not be thinking emphatically, 'Oh, Adhvaitha? I don't want that at all.' Though content with just *bhakthi*, if such a thing as *jnānā* comes as Adhvaitha, they might just accept it as well, without ignoring it as not necessary. Even if some one has this kind of attitude, *Īswarā* will reveal His *nirguṇa* state, bless them to develop interest in it, and ultimately grant the *jnāna mōkshā*.

I mentioned that *Bhagawān* said, 'Just do *bhakthi* in whatever form that you think of me. If you keep doing that, I will make you understand my true internal form, let you enter it, and become one with it.' This statement can be considered to be aimed not only at people who do have the goal of Adhvaitha, yet worship Him in some form since they don't know how to meditate on the *nirguṇa* Brahmam. But it is also aimed at people such as the aforementioned group, who don't think of Adhvaitha and do *bhakthi* only for *bhakthi's* sake, yet in its mature state, if Adhvaitha *jnānā* dawns, they will not reject it as not necessary.

Words of Wisdom from Thirumūlar and *Thiruvaḻḻuvar*

To sum it up, *Īswarā* simply grants either Adhvaitha or Dhvaitha *siddhi* according to the *Jīvā's* goal of whether he is bent on only Adhvaitha, or bent on Dhvaitha insisting that he does not want Adhvaitha.

Thirumūlar said : 'Sever the desire! Sever the desire! Even with *Īśwarā*, sever the desire!'

Thiruvalluvar said : 'Hold on to the attachment towards the one who is devoid of any attachment. Do hold on to this attachment in order to give up this attachment.'

Though these two verses uppear to differ from each other, each is aimed at the two kinds of people we were talking about. Such an understanding will make you realize that both of the advices are indeed correct.

There are people who think, 'Let the principle of *sathya* be shown to me in its true form. If it is *nirguña* that has to be attained only through Adhvaitha *jnānā*, and if it will make me attain it by its own grace, let it do just that, even though I am doing Dhvaitha *bhakthi* towards its *Saguña* form.' *Thirumūlar*'s advice is not aimed towards these people. Instead, his advice is aimed at those who are attached to the *Saguña Īśwarā* and insist on doing only their *bhakthi sādhanā* with a stubborn hold to it. He tells them, 'Don't do this! Don't grow your desire for attaining *Īśwarā* only in the *Saguña* form. Have an open mind with an attitude that if *Īśwarā* has another form that is more real, let me attain that experience.' This is what he means by saying, 'Even with *Īśwarā*, sever the desire.' This seems to imply that since *Īśwarā* will grant only the desired goal and nothing more, if you desire only His *Saguña* form, you cannot attain anything above it.

Every one of the desires must cease. (Desires can cease only if the mind ceases, right?) *Āchāryā* has set up the *Saguña upāsanā* as a way to attain *jnānā*, aiming at people who have the goal of attaining *jnāna siddhi* after the cessation of the mind. Just like *Āchāryā*, *Thiruvalluvar* also advises these people to develop an attachment to *Īśwarā*. Though these people have attachment for *Īśwarā*, they don't have it as their ultimate goal. Their goal is only the state where all attachments are severed. In the same spirit, *Īśwarā* also doesn't let them stop at just *dhvaithic* attachment. However, He does stop with *dhvaithic* attachment towards people who simply stop with such *dhvaithic* attachment themselves. If He is always accepting their *bhakthi* and their service, and bestowing His grace towards them, it only implies that He is also reciprocating this *dhvaithic* attachment, doesn't it? However, here *Thiruvalluvar* refers to Him as 'the one' devoid of attachments. He doesn't use a more general term such as '*Bhagawān*' to refer to Him denoting *Īśwarā* as an *adhvaithic* entity. He has couched the following elaborate message very succinctly in just the two lines of this verse. - 'The *Īśwarā*, whom you are getting attached to, is in fact an attachment-less *adhvaithic* form. Therefore, He will transport you to your goal of this attachment-less Adhvaitha state. Those who wish to sever this attachment, but not able to do so, don't have to attempt for this *jnānā* directly. The same attachment-less substance, which is their goal, has actually become this attachable *Īśwarā*. You must realize that *Īśwarā* is indeed attachment-less in His innate state, as opposed to this 'become' state. As long as you don't forget this fact and get attached to Him in the mode of *bhakthi*, He will raise you up to the attachment-less *jnānā* Himself.'

We started our discussion on desire in general. Starting with the realization that it is indeed the root of a whole line of untoward aspects, we saw numerous varieties of desires. We then saw that we must conquer and subdue the *asuric* line of these desires using the noble and virtuous qualities, which could be called *dēva śakthis*. After further analysis, we found out that even these virtuous *dēva śakthis* could harm us. Even the desire towards *Īśwarā*, who is above all this, could make the Self-Realization difficult. We are able to deduce this much. If we are not steadfast in our aim towards the fundamental *sathya*, *Īswarā* performs His *Māyā* by making us realize only our other aims. We might presume that after a long time of such *Māyā*, He would take pity on us and bless us with the thirst of the true and steady *jnānā*, and then quench it as well.

Nevertheless, it is more commendable if we don't simply leave it up to Him to do this at some distant future, but every so often, keep affirming our *adhvaithic* goal, which doesn't give room for any desire. We must do this without developing undue desire and attachment towards the intermediate *sādhanās*, or the experiences and powers derived from these intermediate *sādhanās*. That is wisdom.

Thoughts of Adhvaitham Right from the Beginning

You might ask how you could escape from the difficulty or problem of getting distracted from the ultimate goal. That is why, right from the beginning, we must develop the habit of spending at least a few minutes thinking about Adhvaitha. Even if that thinking process doesn't come naturally, we must force ourselves to think, 'No matter how great an action is, how noble a social service undertaking is, or how much grace is showered by *Bhagawān* through His divine appearance, none of this is *Āthmā*. They are not *Āthmānubhāvā* (experience of *Āthmā*); not the eternal *sathya*; not the everlasting comfort. All of this is only *Māyā*. If I get soaked up in any of this, I cannot exist in bliss, experiencing the eternal *sathya*. I am really *Āthmā*, which is untouched by any of this and is like a vast, peaceful, *ākāsā* (space).' We must spend just five or ten minutes æ or even as little as thirty seconds or a minute, if spending even five or ten minutes is not possible - seated royally, thinking, 'I am really a substance that doesn't perform any action whatsoever; no other substance can do anything to me either.'

While thinking this very thought of 'I am a substance that doesn't perform any action,' some nook and corner of our mind will be doing just that - making us think of something or the other. While thinking, 'Nothing can do anything to me,' a mosquito might just be biting us, and we might not be able to stand it. Notwithstanding this digression, we must drill into our mind again and again for a few minutes that this 'I', who is doing the acting or being acted upon, is not the true 'I', but it is only *Māyā*. At the stage where we 'think about *Āthmā*,' the mind certainly exists; it certainly does the thinking. It is indeed doing this in the *dhvaithic* mode of thinking 'about' *Āthmā*, as opposed to 'being' *Āthmā*. Even then, only if we make a beginning like this, can we inch towards Adhvaitha. D*hvaithic* actions themselves have two categories: one that pushes us deep into Dhvaitha, and the other which leads us to Adhvaitha. 'Thinking about *Āthmā*' belongs to the second category. Only when thoughts cease altogether, is it *Āthmā*. Therefore, thinking about *Āthmā* is indeed Dhvaitha; it is certainly bound by the mind; there is no doubt about that. Nevertheless, there is no doubt about the fact that this thinking will transport us to *Āthmā*.

Sufferings that Release the Bondage

We need not get upset when we get caught in nuisance and bother one by one after such contemplation for five or ten minutes. We are already entangled with a lot of knots due to *Māyā*. Until all these knots are removed, we will of course have the bothers and nuisance. Reconciling ourselves like this, we must remove these knots one by one by doing the necessary *dhārmika karmās*, *pūjās*, *japas* (muttering prayers), pilgrimage, etc. Even while performing these actions, we will encounter many hurdles and difficulties. Didn't I already mention how we have to suffer getting stiff in the cold and bumped in the crowd while visiting Srirangam and Chidambaram for seeing *Vaikūntā Ēkadhasi* and *Ārudhrā Dharšanam*? Many more hardships such as climbing hills, *anga pradhakshiñam*, etc. have to be endured. Even while engaged in public service, we might have to suffer in inundated areas, mud, and dirt without access to regular supply of food and water. Yet, if we try to not do any of this and sit down 'just being *Āthmā*,' after five or ten minutes, it becomes simply impossible and the mind just bolts off into all sorts of bizarre nonsense. If we attempt to just remain calm in order to keep our body in comfort, we are not able to do it. The body wants all sorts of unbecoming indulgences. We end up getting tangled up even harder if we don't do *karmā* and *bhakthi*. Therefore, in spite of the difficulties and hurdles in *karmā* and *bhakthi*, we must convince ourselves that these hardships just have to be endured and keep doing a lot of *karmānushtānā* (observance of *karmā*) and *Īśwara bhakthi*.

Though we suffer on account of these, these are the kinds of sufferings that rectify other sufferings. These are akin to the sufferings that we go through by having a surgery or an injection in order to get relief from the sufferings due to diseases. If we simply refuse to undergo these sufferings, it will only be tantamount to inviting more sufferings and enlarging our *karmā* bundle caused by other actions and attachments since we can neither remain *adhvaithic* nor do the remedial *karmā* and *Īśwara bhakthi*.

Just as singing various notes carefully in tune with the pitch, which is played in the background as a drone, we must perform various duties of ours with meticulous attention, sincerity, and perfection, while thinking, 'Do we have any duty at all that is more important than being *adhvaithic*?' Otherwise, just like singing out of tune with respect to the pitch, all these actions will only create a big mess instead of a peaceful quiet. Just as music when practices as *sabdha* Brahmam and *nādha* Brahmam merges us into a peaceful silence, the *Sāsthra karmās* will merge us ultimately into the action-less state and *Saguña upāsanā* will merge us into *nirguña*.

Whatever action or duty we perform should be considered as being performed by *Īśwarā* and we should perform them in a detached, but perfect, manner. This is what is called *nishkāmya karmā*. 'Leaving it to Him' is what makes it *bhakthi*. Eventually, the *Jīvā's* load of *karmā* will get all exhausted. The *Jīvā* will reach the state where he can really feel, 'I don't do anything; nothing can do anything to me.'

Performing Action Without Feeling the Burden

Later on, *Īśwarā* might make the *Jīvā* perform various tasks for the sake of the welfare of the world without making him feel the burden. This is the same way in which Janaka executed his 'burden' of royal duties. However, he wouldn't have felt it as a burden or even the feeling that he was executing them. It is an exalted state where we perform action without any conscious realization of it, akin to the state of a baby drinking milk while asleep. It is a state that is totally beyond our grasp now. People of great *vairāgya* (those who have conquered desires) such as Badhragiriyār denote only this state when uttering expressions like, 'When can we draw the comfort of sleep without sleeping?' This state of performing actions without the feeling of being the actor is somewhere at a very distant future for us. We are not sure if it will ever happen to us.

Īśwarā doesn't necessarily designate all the *jnānis* to be performing such actions towards the welfare of the world. There could be several *jnānis* who are out of sight of this world, staying in some cave with their eyes closed in *nirvikalpa samādhi*. Some other *jnānis* might be around as those who teach *jnānā* to the world. A few *jnānis* might even be performing *dhārmic karmās* just like the worldly people, displaying lofty qualities in order to remain as role models to the people of this practical world. These are indeed actions, and they are of course connected to the day-to-day world. Nevertheless, *Īśwarā* gives this guise to these *jnānis* since their example could aid others get released from these *karmās* and this world to reach the state of no-action and no-world. Our path lies in following them and starting the same *karmā* and *bhakthi.*

We shouldn't let ourselves develop intense attachment to these observances of *karmā* and *upāsanā* that we are required to do - that is, we shouldn't entertain any desire. For the main reason that desires only cause a hoard of untoward aspects, we have to retain the awareness of Adhvaitha at least a little bit right from the beginning as follows. - 'All this is only the unavoidable *Māyā*, not the original *sathya.* Our goal is only *Āthmā*, which has none of this. Since we are not able to catch hold of it directly, we are in need of using these methods as the means to reach the place where such catching hold of *Āthmā* will become possible.'

If you want to envision *Āthmā*, our *chitthā*, or mind, which is dirty and unsteady now, has to become clean and remain stable. We can't see the bottom of a body of water if it is dirty or is full of waves. This is also similar. *Karmā* helps remove the dirt from the *chitthā* and *bhakthi* helps stop its movement.

Right when starting out with a lot of *karmās*, we should also increase *bhakthi* along with it. Unless we are able to surrender the fruits of all the *karmās* at *Īśwarā's* feet thinking of Him as the *phala dhāthā* (provider of fruits) for all the *karmās*, all these *karmās* that we perform in the *nishkāmya* spirit, will only be dry. So we will get tired of it after a while. Mixing the love of *bhakthi* towards *Īśwarā* with these *karmās* is akin to adding ghee to dry flour. Just like stretching the dough thin while kneading the ghee into the flour and rolling, doing *karmā* with *bhakthi* will give it a nice flavor and a fine texture, and we can stretch it a lot farther. We will have to be watchful though to make sure that this *Īśwara bhakthi* doesn't just remain *dhvaithic*, and we don't develop the egoistic feeling from the *sādhanā*. All these require our goal to stay steadfast on *sathya.* That is possible only if we have at least a little bit of *Āthma chinthana* (thoughts on *Āthmā*) right from the beginning.

The three Paths Right from the Beginning

Bhagawān has specified in *Gītā* very clearly that all the three disciplines of *karmā*, *bhakthi*, and *jnānā* must be observed together right from the beginning. They could have different proportions in this mixture, nevertheless, they should all be there. This is why He preached all the three *yōgās*.

He prodded Arjuna into action by saying, 'Yudhyasva!' - 'Go! Fight!' When Arjuna asked, 'Why should there be a war? Why don't I become a *jnānī*?' He said, 'Nothing doing. yudhyasva - vigatha jvara:' (*Gītā* 3-30).

What does '*vigatha jvara*' mean? It means, 'without having a fever'. 'Did Arjuna have a fever?' Yes, he did! - He had the attachment-fever towards his kith and kin, wondering whether it is proper to kill them in the battle. His mind was boiling and bubbling. It was indeed a fever! Because of his desire for his relationship, he thought such a war shouldn't be fought though it was necessary to uphold dharma. When his mind was subject to such bonds of desire, he talked as though he had a deep inclination towards *jnānā*, which is above dharma. He said, 'What is there in the royal power? I'll just become a *sanyāsi* and beg for alms.' He was talking so philosophically.

Bhagawān's mission was to set him right when he was caught up in such bonds of desires. Therefore, He had to preach *Karma* mārga, which is the means for the beginners. Since *nishkāmya karmā* was the correct path for Arjuna, the individual, He elaborated this path significantly and taught it to him. Since *Gītā* was primarily aimed at Arjuna, He stressed on what was applicable to him and people like him. People misunderstand this and now, starting from some prominent leaders, a lot of people declare, '*Gītā*'s essence is only *karma yōgā*, not *jnānā yōgā*.'

Bhagawān preached *karma yōgā* to the *rajō-guṅa*-dominated hero Arjuna, considering him as a representative of the majority of common folk, not because He considered him a great *sādhakā*. He thought Arjuna must do *karmās*, without the bubbling and boiling of the mind and the mischief played by his own personal feelings. *Bhagawān* thought that that was the most suitable way for Arjuna.

However, since *karma yōgā* can be performed well only if *bhakthi* is mixed in it as opposed to just dry *karmā*, He added a qualifying clause after asking him to 'Fight!' as follows:

'mām anusmara yudhya cha' (Gītā 8-7)

'Do not simply fight! Think of me - mām anusmara! When your outward thoughts are on the battle, in support of that, let your inward thoughts be towards me. Adding such *bhakthi* as a support, go fight! That is, in the dēvāsura war, use the army of *sath karmās* and *sath guṅās* with the support of *sath bhakthi* and fight against the *asūra śakthis*' says *Bhagawān*.

Arjuna (and the general society that is represented by him), who is a rightful recipient of only *karma yōgā* can, at best, try only *śaraṅāgathi* (surrender) in *bhakthi*, not attain *Brahma nirvāṅā* in *jnānā*. That is why, when He concluded the *Gītā*, *Bhagawān* said, 'Renounce all dharmas and do *śaraṅāgathi* to me.' *Bhagawān* felt, 'When specially encouraging him to perform *swadharmā* following the *Karma* mārga, it shouldn't be concluded in such a way as to make him think that that is the goal in itself. On the other hand, telling him to 'Be Brahmam or Be *Āthmā*' wouldn't work since it is beyond his grasp.' Therefore, He said, 'Everything doesn't come to an end with just this *swadharmā*. You should then give up this thought also. You shouldn't stop with this while under the firm grip of desires. You are not yet ready to place yourself in *jnānā*, which transcends both dharma and *adharma*. Not only you, no one can achieve that by oneself. I am the one who has to do this for you. I sometimes do this without revealing my role in it for people who have this *jnāna mārga* as their goal right from the beginning. But your case is different. Therefore I am telling this to you. Without considering dharma and *adharma*, consider me as your sole refuge and surrender unto my feet. That is enough. Consider this as your goal for the time being. After that, I'll take care of whatever the ultimate, permanent goal is.' He concluded *Gītā* talking about this *śaranāgathi*, which contains many such ideas.

Many people don't properly understand this either. Since He concluded *Gītā* with the final message on *śaranāgathi*, people think its supreme essence is *bhakthi*, not *jnānā*. This misinterpretation is exactly similar to the earlier one where people thought *Karma* mārga is the proper way even for advanced *sadhākās* since He preached that as the immediate path of *sādhanā* for Arjuna considering his nature. *Bhagawān* did not want Arjuna to think, 'Isn't *Bhagawān* glorifying *swadharmā* so much? So it must be enough. The *sādhanā* probably completes with that.' Since concluding it with Adhvaitha *jnānā* would also be far above his reach, He thought it better to end it with the previous stage of *śaranāgathi*. This is the proper understanding of the purport of *Gītā*.

In addition, *Bhagawān* also thought, 'However, I shouldn't completely omit the principle of *sathya* from my message to Arjuna either. No matter what level a *sādhakā* is at, he shouldn't be left completely ignorant of *Āthmā*. Everyone must be aware of the highest state, where all the *sādhanās* lose their significance. At that state, there is nothing to be achieved, The *Jīvā* remains the achieved substance, the one true substance, and he simply exists there. Only when reaching this place, which has no room for 'yudhyasva', can there be *Śānthi* (peace). Everyone must learn this at least to a small extent and remain peaceful for at least a little while – at least an attempt should be made for such an experience.'

So thinking, *Bhagawān* also expounded a lot on *jnānā* all the way up to *Brahma nirvāñā*, which is the attainment of Adhvaitha *mōkshā*.

In the last chapter, He talked a lot only about the action-less *jnāna Sanyāsa yōgā*. Looking at it logically, it might seem that He should have concluded it right there. Shouldn't a teaching be concluded at the final goal? However, with a supreme *krupa*, He took the *śishya's* (student) level into consideration and empathizing with it, He concluded with a psychological consideration rather than a logical one. Considering the *bhakthi-śarañāgathi* to be the most encouraging, consoling, and faith-instilling aspect that was at Arjuna's highest level of capability, He concluded it with that message.

In the concluding, eighteenth chapter, *Bhagawān* describes the ultimate state as, 'The one who becomes a *jnāni* after taking up *sanyāsa*, gets released from the feelings of *ahankāra*, *kāma*, *krōdha*, etc., is rid of the perception of 'mine', is absolutely peaceful, and attains the qualification to become Brahmam. After that, he attains the state of *Āthmā*, with an equanimity towards all creations and becomes a *Brahma bhūtha*.' He could have ended it right at this point. However, He must have thought, 'If concluded like this, Arjuna might feel overwhelmed as though he was led up to the top floor and then the ladder pulled away from him.' Therefore, it seems as though He wanted to conclude with a note of *bhakthi* and started his final message as, 'That *Brahma bhūtha* develops a supreme *bhakthi* towards me' and ended it with *śarañāgathi*. Since earlier on, He had revealed His *viswarūpa* (universal form), instilling reverence, and then revealed the *Vishñurūpa* (*Vishñu*'s form), instilling loving *bhakthi*, He must have thought of raising Arjuna to the level of doing *prapatthi* (surrender) and concluded it like that.

Āchāryā says that the *parabhakthi*, which is referred to as *prapatthi* in the end is nothing but *jnānā*.

While designating *karmā* for Arjuna and encouraging him into action, *Bhagawān* also led him in the path of *bhakthi* to the extent of providing him the vision of His *viswarūpa*. Therefore, as a fitting finale, He ended it with *śaraṅāgathi*.

Foundation of Adhvaitham Laid by Gītā

Bhagawān didn't leave out *jnānā* either; He poured a lot of that too in His *upadēśā*. That is why, *Āchāryā* regards *Gītā* as one of the *prasthāna thraya* (the three fundamental works of authority) and has composed an elaborate *bhāshya* for it.

Bhagawān has started the instructions on a very high level of Adhvaitha and *jnānā* even before starting on His instructions on *karma yōgā* that were specifically meant for Arjuna in order to create an affinity for *Āthmā* right from the beginning.

Gītōpadēśa really starts from the eleventh *slōkā* of the second chapter. All preceding *slōkās* are only like a preface. They simply describe the background setting in which *Gītā* was born. Even in the very first *slōkā* of His *upadēśā*, *Bhagawān* says, '*Jnānis* worry about neither the living nor the dead' and then continues on as, 'Because, no one is ever non-existent. Everyone is simply *Āthmā*, which is never destroyed, is everlasting, and beyond measures. It just has obtained a body. Only this body dies.' All this is highly *adhvaithic*. He continues this exuberance for twenty *slōkās*. Only then does he come to subject of *swadharma karmānushtānā*, the path that He teaches Arjuna. He makes the transition from Brahmam to *karmā*, saying, 'Even looking at it from the angle of your *swadharmā*, you shouldn't withdraw from the battle. What higher action is there for a *kshathriya* than a righteous battle?'

When I talked about Pūrva-*utthara Mīmāmsā*, I mentioned that one after the other, it takes one from dharma to Brahmam. Because it talked only about dharma without inculcating the thoughts about Brahmam, the Pūrva *Mīmāmsā* had to be denounced by *Vēdhānthā*. Seeing to it that the same flaw is not committed, *Bhagawān* lays the foundation of Brahmam even before initiating Arjuna into *swadharma karmānushtānā* in *Karma* mārga.

His main intention was to teach the *yōgā* of *swadharma karmā* to Arjuna. Even so, He wanted Arjuna to be aware of the doctrine of *jnānā* called *Sānkhya* even before that. So He started with just that. After finishing with them, He starts,

> *'ēshā thē(a)bhihithā sānkhyē*
> *buddhir-yōgē thvimām śruṇu' (2-39)*

-'I have finished talking about the knowledge pertaining to *jnāna yōgā*; now listen to that pertaining to *karma yōgā*.'

After that, all through that chapter, He says that the purpose of *karma yōgā* is to transcend the three *guṇās* and then get rid all the bonding (that is, becoming Adhvaitha). Proceeding along this line, He finishes it with the elaborate enumeration of the characteristics of a *sthitha prajna*.

Arjuna was not aware of proper dharma. He was under the mistaken opinion that familial bond is the dharma of love and not fighting even to establish dharma is *ahimsā* dharma, etc. So *Bhagawān* finishes this chapter, giving him the description of a *sthitha prajna*, the one who has transcended to the level of Brahmam even above dharma and exists as a still ocean with no confusion or concern.

Start from Today!

All of you are Arjunas. Just like him, you are also in a confused state, in *vishādha yōgā*. Therefore, I am praying to

Krishña *Paramāthmā* on your behalf for you to follow *Bhagawān*'s teachings just as Arjuna did and reach the same state that he did in the end. His heart filled with happiness, he declared, 'My mental confusion is all gone. My doubts are all cleared. By Your grace, I have attained proper awareness.'

Right from today, start gathering the *dēva vruththi* in order to conquer the *asūra vruththi*, do a lot of *karmānushtānā* and with utter humility, start doing *bhakthi* towards *Paramēśwarā*. Don't forget that *Āthmā* is the ultimate goal and this *Āthmā* is simply an awareness without the mind or any *vruththi*, including the *daivika vruththi*. No matter how much of dirt is blanketing over this *Āthmā*, we always remain as this *Āthmā*, including this very moment. Sit down for a while with this awareness. Every once in a while, amidst the tasks, just try to think about our true, innate *sathya*, which is action-less and is spread out as a vast expanse of supreme peace. This practice will remove our own personal attachments that could be formed by our mind while we are engaged in a task, and help reduce our remnant *karmā* as opposed to getting it further increased.

While trying to destroy the *asūrās*, don't forget that the *dēvās* should also leave later on. Deal with your life struggles wisely. Fighting while thinking of *Bhagawān* as '*mām anusmara*', will make the attachment form only with Him and not with the *dēvās*. Later, they can also be got rid of with His grace. Going further up, without holding on to the attachment even towards *Bhagawān* in His *Saguña* form, you must do the *sādhanā* in order to become one with His *nirguña*, *adhvaithic*, real form. As a humble *ankurarpanam* (formal commencement) for it, start the *Āthmā dhyāna* (meditation) at least a little bit, right from now on.

Go Beyond the Good!

If we allow the dēvā *guṇās* to stay because they are good and *dharmic*, we might encounter hurdles even from them because they are, after all, foreign to *Āthmā* as well. We should always keep this in mind and be vigilant.

During the World War, when Britain, America, France, and Russia as Allies fought with the Axis of Hitler (Germany), Mussolini (Italy), and Japan, the Allies appeared to be the good, *dēva śakthi*. Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese seemed to be *asuric*. Fortunately, the Allies won. But what happened after that? They are themselves splintered into two parts and fighting with each other. In fact, far worse than actually fighting, they are engaged in a cold war, which is keeping the world constantly under fear and hopelessness.

We don't have to go that far. Consider our own affairs. When we were engaged in the freedom struggle against the British who were ruining our great culture, the leaders of that struggle appeared to be the aspect of dēvās, considering their nature and their doctrines. The foreign rule appeared *asuric*, no matter how good they presented themselves as. After we drove them away and became an independent nation, what are we seeing? The same party that appeared good and which won the freedom struggle for us, has splintered into three or four parts, and these parts are engaged in verbal battles, painting each other as *asuric*. People are simply not able to figure out who among these various factions could be clumped together as *dēva śakthis*. Therefore the people themselves are having differences of opinion and remain in various separate groups.

I just mentioned it to show that even good aspects don't stay that way forever and give room for bad elements even within their own framework. Therefore, we must understand that no one aspect should be firmly held on to with a desire for it, but use it only to remove the bad that is currently having a firm hold and control over us. With this understanding, we should keep performing our *karmānushtānā* and *bhakthi upāsanā* sincerely. We should do *karma yōgā*, then *bhakthi yōgā*, and finally the *Sānkhya* (*jnānā*) *yōgā* that was established by *Bhagawān*. Again, keeping in mind, how He had mentioned *jnāna mārga* even before *karma yōgā* as a foundation, we must include *Āthmā dhyāna* at least a little bit even from the beginning. Only then will it leave no room for the fight among the *dēvās* or caused by the dēvās themselves. This will then lead to the dissolution of the very person who is in the *Jīvā* mode and serving as an arena for such fights. After that, we will remain only as *Āthmā* in the state that has no fights, but only an everlasting peace. Even if it is not achieved in this birth, this practice will open up the way to reach it some day, in some future birth.

Contemplating Āthmā is Essential for Everyone

The elders have said that only the human beings are endowed with the ability to see the truth after opening the doors of *jnānā*. Since only man among all other animals is capable of attempting for the *jnānā* that will reveal himself as Parabrahmam, it is said 'getting a human birth is a rare accomplishment'. *Āchāryā* also said the same thing in *Vivēka Chūdāmaṇi* as *'janthūnām narajanma dhurlabham'*.

Therefore, all of us who have obtained this human birth must attempt to attain this *jnānā* by doing *Āthma vichārām* (self-inquiry) at least for a little while.

It is not at all right to say that we don't have the time for it. Saying that we have the time to do all sorts of actions that are only towards temporary pleasures, while having no time to attempt for obtaining the permanent bliss, only indicates how stupid we are.

What is the motive of *Bhagawān*'s *līlās* that He conducts with forces such as *Māyā*, nature, mind, etc.? He is only testing us to see whether we use the actions that we perform using these forces, to find the way to reach the everlasting bliss that is beyond these forces. Therefore, until all the *karmās* are exhausted, we must keep doing our duties or *karmānushtānās* in this world. These include the mundane aspects such as matrimony, eating, enjoying entertainment, etc. Within limits, every age-appropriate and stage-of-life-appropriate activity is permissible. They all aid us to mature gradually.

But if we stop with just these and say that we don't have time for meditating on *Āthmā*, it only means that we are mere simpletons no matter how many B.A.s, M.A.s, or Doctorates that we have to our credit. We have time for making a living, studying, and conducting a family life, but do not have the time to attempt for the *jnānā* that provides the fulfillment that these other activities are incapable of providing. This is only akin to saying, 'I have time to collect all the garbage and brush and set a bon fire, but no time to get warmed up from it,' or saying, 'I had time to do the job, but no time to go and get my wage!' The ultimate goal of all actions is to take us to *Āthmā*. If we do not engage in meditating on such *Āthmā*, even as a pretense for five or ten minutes, all our actions will only have ourselves as the ultimate end and keep giving the *dhvaithic asānthi* (lack of peace), but not raise us to reach *Āthmā*. Claiming that there is no time for trying this important activity, or that the mind is not yet ready, is only giving lame excuses. Only after repeated attempts can we condition the mind. Therefore, saying that we are not trying because of lack of maturity topsy-turvy.

Lack of the strength of determination is the reason for all this argument. Lack of self-confidence and the lack of faith in *Iswarā's* grace are the reasons that prompt such excuses.

Where there is a will, there is a way. If there is a will to try to attain the true form of *Āthmā* by getting rid of the false mind, certainly there is a way to open the doors of *jnānā*.

What is the reason for such a lack of will? It is only the lack of realization of the necessity for opening the way and going to the world of *jnānā*. If we were caught in a huge downpour or scorching heat, with how much *agitation* would we be looking for some open door to seek shelter? At that time, if we had a very strong will and an intense motivation, we would even knock at some door and get it opened for fulfilling our need. Similarly, only because we do not have the motivation to seek the Āthmic shelter to escape the heat of *samsārā* or the deluge of *samsārā*, we are not making the attempt for the redemption.

The various mutts are established only for the purpose of showing the falsehood and the troubles of *samsārā*, creating the will and eagerness to get released from it, and then teaching the way for such a release to these people. The duty of people like me is to turn your thoughts to these aspects.

Things to Learn After Deep Thinking

Therefore, I am requesting you to simply think about it on your own. Are you finding peace in your life at the moment? Though we do find some intermittent pleasure and satisfaction, it seems that we are constantly caught in the tug of an unending series of forces, and we end up losing our peace, going through many difficulties. Are we ever so peaceful as to feel with total relaxation, 'I have absolutely no worries, no fears, and no miseries?' Not really, right?

You will of course answer no.

All right, what is the reason for all these commotions, restless pursuits, tugs, and difficulties?

If you think about it, you will notice that everyone has an impulse to do something all the time without remaining idle even for a moment. These actions are the very cause for the acquisition of everything that destroys peace. The fact that peace can be attained only if there is no action will be crystal clear to everyone.

The next question is 'What is the reason for action?' Think about it. You will realize that each action is performed toward fulfilling some desire among the many that we have.

Even all the actions that are done under the impulse of anger, infatuation, or any other feeling are really due to some desire that is lurking underneath all these feelings. You will understand this if you think deep.

If you wondered whether you could just stop the action, you would realize that it is not that easy to accomplish. You will see that *prakruthi* (Nature) is constantly driving one into action.

That is why, at this stage, the *sāsthrās* say, 'Go ahead with your actions. But reduce such actions that are done due to some desire. Start performing actions aimed towards the welfare of the world instead of doing them for some selfish desire.' Since so many kinds of actions have to be conducted in the world, the *sāsthrās* have nicely categorized them into various *swadharmās* and assigned them as traditional inheritance for everyone.

Start doing them accordingly.

You will then realize that *karmānushtānā* only helps with not giving room for personal desires, and it does not directly fight and conquer desires in the attempt to destroy them. You will see that these *karmās* simply divert some one by not providing the time to develop these personal desires. However, they are not useful for totally destroying them.

The *sāsthrās* mention *bhakthi* precisely for helping with this destruction of desire. The mind is the origin for desire. So only if this mind is diverted from the *indhriyās* towards *Īśwarā* can we stop personal desires. Even so, since people initially think of the mind as the 'I' within their physical body, importance is given first to purify the actions that are performed using this body. Prominence is given to dealing with the subtler mind only after that. In this second stage, if we simply do such *Īśwara bhakthi* and remove all the desires from the mind, it will greatly reduce the pulls of *saṁsārā* and create a great deal of pure *ānandhā* and *śānthi*.

If you analyze further, you will notice that it is still not total, everlasting peace. You will see that there are so many yearnings even in *bhakthi*. It will be clear that you don't really get immersed in this *Īśwarā*, whom you are worshipping, and experience Him. You will realize that His true form is not visible in *bhakthi*; rather, He appears to you only in whichever form you think of Him. Similarly, just as His true form is not known in *bhakthi*, your true inner form is not realized either. You will only know that the state of mind that is being engrossed in *bhakthi* is not the final one. This is because you might get a glimpse of a higher state from time to time, while losing yourself in the force of *bhakthi*. Even in those situations, you will still not fully realize that state which is above the mind and actually experience it.

When analyzing this thoroughly, you will realize that getting rid of desire alone is not sufficient to end the struggle of *saṁsārā*. Since the mind that does *bhakthi* also has its own wants, yearnings, and hardships, the war will end and everlasting peace will occur only if this mind ceases as well. At that point, if you study the works of *jnānā* with rapt attention, you can get an understanding of the solitary *Āthmā*, which has also become *Īśwarā* and the *Jīvā*. Unlike the current superficial understanding, you can embed these concepts of *vēdhānthic jnānā* in the depth of this purified mind.

If it is understood in this manner, then just like knocking on the doors for seeking shelter when caught in intense heat or flooding rain, an intense motivation will be born to run with a strong will in search of a way out and knock on the doors of *mōkshā*.

It is to get this ultimate motivation that you are told to do at least some *Āthma dhyāna* right from the start.

It is true that *Āthmā* cannot be meditated upon. *Āthmā* is indeed an isolated entity that is not within the grasp of any medium, including *dhyāna*. Nonetheless, we are able to think about it at least a little bit in a somewhat understandable manner to the mind, aren't we? Even while reading descriptions like 'An absolutely peaceful state that is unperturbed, a vast expanse lying like a wave-less, great ocean', we are overcome with a feeling of this blissful space of *Āthmā* untouched by the effect of the struggles of *samsārā*, aren't we? Let it be a mere emotion, an illusion, or whatever! As long as it is a thought that provides some comfort and helps us settle down quietly for a while, it is a very lofty one. We, who keep doing bad things through the *indhriyās* and the mind, are not only helped by these thoughts in staying away from doing anything bad, but they also keep us from doing the good and enable us to sit down with peace and quiet. *Āthmā dhyāna* is nothing but being immersed in such thoughts at least for a little while. If we simply start it with some such *bhāvanā* (hue of emotion), when this *bhāvanā* strengthens, matures, and intensifies, the true state will begin to reveal itself.

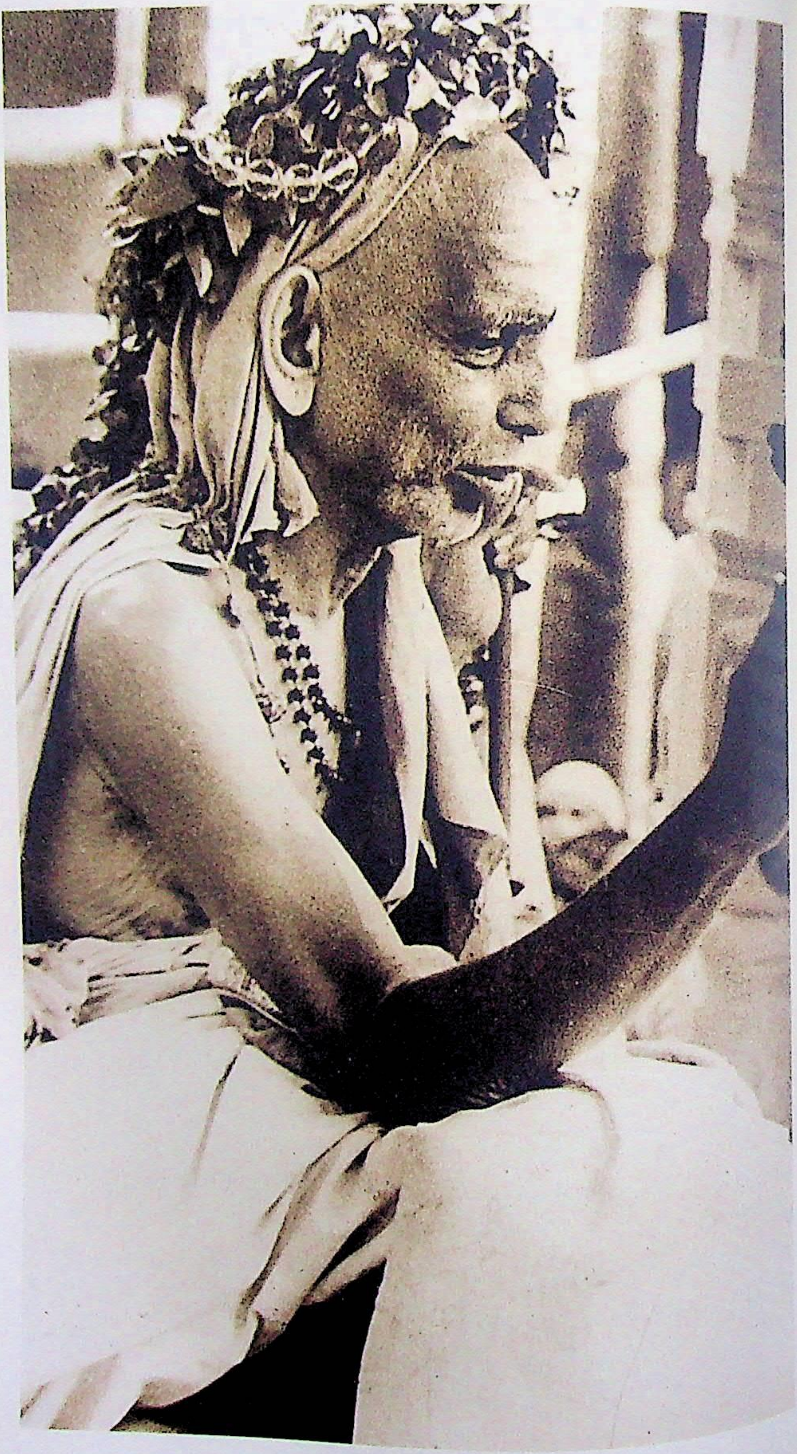
Thus, as long as people realize that they are caught up in a struggle and seek out peace just as people who are caught up in a war are eager for the dawn of peace, they will certainly find time to do *Āthma dhyāna*. When their mind is set on it, a way will surely dawn.

Ambāḻ has taken the form of *Māyā*. In this form of *Māyā*, she has become all of us and been subjected to all our struggles, and She watches this and performs Her *līlā* while at the same time detaching Herself from these struggles. Let us pray to Her to subsume all of us within Her *jnāna swarūpa* and grant us the peace of the end of war. She has to will it with Her magnanimous heart. For Her, will and way are one and the same. This statement is still not quite adequate. Her will is the final goal itself, which is the end of the way! Yet She doesn't do everything on the strength of Her will alone. She makes us Her instrument and makes it appear as though we perform all these trials and attempts and receive their fruits. This is all Her līlā. Therefore, I pray to Her to grant us the ability to enter the *sādhanā* mārga for attaining *Āthmānandha* and also grant the enthusiasm to continue that journey. Let us all pray to Her to open the door of *jnānā* in the end so that we can dissolve into Her state of *sathya* in unison and become peaceful bliss with no more struggles. This is indeed the milk that this Mother needs to feed us and the *biksha* (alm) that She needs to provide us.

'*jnānavairāgya* siddhyartham bikshām dhēhi cha pārvathi'

* * *

BHAKTHI



ADHVAITHA PHILOSOPHY AND THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

Sri *Ādhi Śankara Bhagavadhpādhā* has written Adhvaitha commentaries and won the admiration of scholars from all over the world. Commentaries that he wrote on *Brahmam Sūthrā*, Upanishads and *Bhagavadh Gītā*, are called *'Bhāshyās'*. That apart, he has also written Adhvaitha *Granthās* (works) like *'Vivēka Chūdāmaṅi'*, *'Upadēśā Sahasri'*, which are his own original works. To differentiate these, from the *Bhāshyās* (commentaries) he wrote, his original works are referred to as '*Prakāraṅa Granthās*'.

The Adhvaitha philosophy discussed in all these works is a great one. The world which we think is real is an illusion. The only truth, is the *Paramāthmā*. We who think we are the *Jīvāthmās* and are different from it, are also in reality the *Paramāthmā*. The *Jīvān* is the *Brahmam* - that is Adhvaitha. Our *Āchāryā* has firmly established this philosophy based on the *Śruthi* (*Vēdhās*), his intellect and his experience after considerable analysis and thought.

However, this philosophy, which is the ultimate truth, seems beyond reach for most of us. Although after reading *Āchāryā*'s arguments we are satisfied at the level of the intellect that Adhvaitha is the truth, when it comes to experiencing Adhvaitha, we are far from it. What is the use of knowing that *Jīvān* and *Brahmam* are one, just intellectually? We are not able to realise that we are the ever so peaceful and steady *Brahmam*. We are constantly running. Our mind is for ever restless. The only truth we know is the restless mind and this universe. If the mind becomes still, this world, which is an illusion, will vanish. We will be the *Brahmam*. However, the mind is never still! Therefore, we are never able to experience Adhvaitha.

Yet we must begin to get there, from this state only. With what seems real to us, we must start our *Anushtānās* (religious practices) progress step-by-step and realise not just intellectually but through experience that all this, is not the ultimate truth and attain Adhvaitha Siddhi.

From Current State to Adhvaitham

It is not that the *Āchāryā* does not know our despicable state. He is the embodiment of compassion. The *Āchāryā* knew that Adhvaitha *Bhāshyā* and *Prakārańa Granthās* alone would not help us. He is like the Everest in intellectual ability and experience. Yet he comes down from that peak to our level, holds our hands and takes us up step by step.

Before making it still, we must bring under control the mind, which is running around like a mad dog in all the four directions. To achieve this every one must perform the *Karmās* prescribed according to one's own dharma. The *Āchāryā* prescribed the '*Karmā-Anushtānā*' (religious observances) for all of us for a specific purpose. Performing the *Karmās* prescribed for us, without desire or anger, in a spirit of service, gives us '*Chittha Ṡuddhi*' (cleanses the mind). *Karmā* is an action, where we forget the mind somewhat. Because we remain focused on the work, we do not let the mind run amock. In addition to working in this manner, (where we have ignored the mind) we must train and immerse it in good things, and focus it on one thing. The more the mind begins to focus on one thing, the more it will come under control. Thus, there will be a new path for it to submerge/dissolve in the *Āthmā*. It is for this reason that we must engage in Bhakthi towards the *Saguńa Mūrthi* (*Īśwarā* with attributes) who is the embodiment of all things auspicious. Once the mind overflows with joy, and stays focused on that '*Mūrthi*', it will not dart around without control. It will stay focused on the 'Ishta *Mūrthi*' (favourite god). Thereafter through the grace of that very *Mūrthi*, we can move above the state where we are separate from it and are enjoying its qualities and can dissolve in it and become the '*Nirguña Brahmam*' (*Brahmam* without attributes)

Ādhi Śankarā's Devotional Hymns

This is the reason why the *Āchāryā* has ordained Bhakthi *Upāsanā* (Devotional worship) for us, like the *Karmānushtānā* that he prescribed. Since we do not know how to engage in Bhakthi or do prayers. He himself has composed several soul stirring devotional hymns on various deities and blessed us.

He has composed '*Soundarya* Lahar*i*' on *Ambāḷ* and '*Śivananda Lahari*' on *Śiva*. Both these have one hundred *slōkās* each. He has also composed several short *sthothrās* on several deities which are suitable for praying to each one's. 'Ishta Dēvatha' and get blessings.

We must know at least some of these by heart. The *Āchāryā*'s greatness is his ability to give the most exalted philosophy, and soul stirring feelings, in a very simple elegant manner. He who wrote the Adhvaitha *Bhāshyā* which even scholars had to study in depth to understand the fine nuances, has also composed several hymns - long and short - that even a child would enjoy and recite. Such is his grace.

Shatpadhī Sthōthrā

One such *sthōthrā* is on *Mahā Vishñu*- the lord who preserves and protects the world. It is full of great thoughts, very touching and is a pleasure to recite. He has named it the *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā*. If we retain it well in our minds, we will know the *Āchāryā*, *Mahā Vishñu* and ourselves too. Knowing ourselves is in the proper way is Adhvaitha. This *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā* will take us to such a peak.

Padham: Part of Poetry

Shatpadhī' means that which has six feet. 'Shat' - Six. 'Padham' - Feet. What is this *sthōthrā* with 'six legs'?

'Padham' means feet; it also means 'a word'. In a *slōkā* one fourth is also called 'Padham' or 'Pādham'. In the human body, the leg is one fourth (a quarter). Similarly, in a *slōkā* 'Padham' or 'Pādham' indicates a quarter of a *slōkā*.

Because of this arrangement of words which split into four in a slōkā poetry has come to be called 'Padhya'. If we were to take only the meaning 'word' for 'Padham' even prose is a 'Padhya' made of 'Padhams'. However, for prose the term that is used is Gadhyam. Gadh means to speak. Therefore, speech, dialogue etc which are prose is called Gadhyam. Because of the arrangement of uniformly grouping four parts each representing a quarter of the verse poetry is called Padhyam. Songs are also in poetry form, therefore they too are referred to as 'Padhyam'. Gadhyam - prose/speech/dialogue. 'Padhyam' - poetry/song/music.

Padham is one-fourth of a *slōkā*. Let me give you an example. Let us take '*Śukhlāmbaradaram*' - a *slōkā* that is commonly known. It is formed in Anushtup *Chandas* (Anushtup Metre). That is, it has thirty two aksharas (in Sanskrit). This is split into four parts of eight letters each. That is four 'Pādhams' each.

If it is written in Tamil alphabets and counted, it will be more than thirty two However, in Sanskrit which has combination letters 'khlam' is just one letter. Therefore, if we go by the vowel sounds and not count the alphabets as they are written, as in the script form, we will arrive at the right number. If we calculate that way the vowel 'a', and the consonants kh, l, m join to form 'khlam'. Therefore, 'khlam' becomes one 'akshara' (letter). Similarly, 'shnum' in '*Vishñum*' too becomes one akshara (letter). It will be three letters in Tamil, but in Sanskrit it will be one. Because the vowel 'U' is joining with the consonants sh, n, m.

Life Body and Consonants

When we talk about Vowels and Consonants, one is reminded about what the *Śaiva Siddhānthis* talk about.

The *Vaishṇavās* refer to *Jīvāthmā-Paramāthmā* as *Śarīra-Sarīri. Śaiva Siddhānthis* too have something similar. That is our body has something called 'Life' in it. If it goes away, the body is completely useless. Similarly, all *Jīvāthmās* put together become the body of the *Paramāthmā*; *Paramāthmā* is the life inside it. It is the Life of the Life. *Paramāthmā* is thus the ultimate life of all the lives put together. This is the *Śarīra-Sarīri* philosophy.

What we see is the *Śarīra* (body). 'Life' is not visible to us. That is why the body has been named 'Mei' (in Tamil) (truth). Yet when the life that is not visible to us goes away, this 'me*i*' becomes, a 'po*i*' (in Tamil [false]) and is totally useless. Similarly, this '*Jīvalōka*' (the world of *Jīvās*) becomes false if the *Bhagawān* who is the '*Antharyāmi*' inside is not there.

Even though it is called 'Po*i*' the *Śaiva Siddhānthis* have not said it emphatically like the *Āchāryā* in Adhvaitha. He has said that anything other than the Ultimate Truth (*Brahmam*) is false, a *Māyā* (illusion). They propound a truth even for the *Jīva prapancha* in which *Īswarā* resides and operates. To explain this they use the example of the vowels, consonants and combined letters. Because the vowels have been separated from the consonants, in spite of these consonants being called 'mei', it has come to be that these sounds do not have a life of their own. Even the consonants are like the human body. Just as the human body is useless without life, these consonants, cannot be pronounced independently. These are useless without the sounds from the vowels. Therefore, can we say consonants don't exist, they are false? When they are combined with the vowels, don't they acquire different forms and sounds? Then everything does not sound the same, is it not? Therefore, even consonants must have an independent form without the vowels. Hence they must have some reality about them. We cannot dismiss them off as false. Similarly even the *Jīvās* who are separate, must have an independent reality like the consonants. We cannot dismiss them as false or as being untrue. Yet if there is no life, everything becomes dead. That is what the *Śaiva Siddhānthis* say. Instead of saying that everything is the same *Āthmā*, they separate things a bit like Dhvaitha, use this as an example. They say *Paramāthmā* is like the Vowel, and *Jīvāthmā* is like the consonant.

In fact, even Sri *Śankara Bhagavadhpādhā* has not said the world (*lōka*) is entirely false. He has talked about several levels of truth. I have not come here to engage in a philosophical debate. I started talking about the *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā* composed by the *Āchāryā* who himself has said that such debates and arguments are futile and prescribed bhakthi. The *sthōthrā* is to help us acquire bhakthi. When I started explaining the 'six-feet' then I went on to explain the Padham of a *slōkā*, then we went off to talk about the number of letters and finally landed in *Śaiva Siddhānthā*!!

Let us start all over again with '*Śukhlāmbaradaram*!'

Hymn with Six Slōkās

The *Āchāryā* has composed *Shatpadhī sthōthrām* based on the *Jāthi Chandas* (metre). He is an Advaithi, yet there is no limit to the variety he has displayed (in his works)! All the *slōkās* in this hymn are in the *Āryā Vruttham* style. In all of them, the first line and the third line have 12 *māthras*; second line has 18 *māthras* and fourth line has 15 *māthras*. If we were to calculate the *māthras* for every Padham in the *slōkā*, it would engage our time very interestingly!

Only if we calculate the *māthras* based on the laghu and guru method (not on the aksharas) can we decipher the pattern in the *slōkās*. Otherwise, we might think that the pattern is wrong. Yet because of the *Āchāryā*'s extraordinary mastery over words, we will not feel that anything is wrong with the *slōkā* while we are reciting it. (in spite of the fact that we have been used to the *Vruttham* style most often, and may not understand the *Jāthi* style). The words and the sounds are so compatible and flow in a beautiful manner in this *sthōthrā*. It is so simple (easy) that even a child can remember it effortlessly.

If we leave out the last *slōkā*, which is like the *'Phalaśruthi'*, there are six *slōkās* in this. (The *Phalaśruthi* too is in the same metre.)

It is 'like' the *Phalaśruthi*, but not exactly a *Phalaśruthi*. If it was a proper *Phalaśruthi* it must explicitly state 'These are the benefits that will accrue to the one who recites this *slōkā*'. Here it has not been expressed thus in the last *slōkā*. I will discuss that later. I will talk about all the *slōkās* from the first one in a sequence.

While giving this the title '*Shatpadhī*' (that is a *slōkā* with six Padhams), it looks as if the *Āchāryā* meant the full *slōkā* as a Padham, and not the Padham as one part of the *slōkā*. The word Padam is used with different meanings. In the *Vēdhās* people recite the Padam, Kramam and finally end with Ganam. Padam, Kramam and Ganam etc are reciting the *Vēdhās* by forming different patterns with the 'mantra-aksharas'. Some one who has mastery in reciting Ganam is called the 'Ganapāti'. Here 'Padam' refers to reciting word by word separately.

There is a practice of using the word Padham to indicate the full *slōkā* instead of just one fourth of the *slōkā*. When we refer to *Jayadēvā's* '*Gīta Gōvindā*' as '*Ashtapadhi*' it denotes the full stanza. Even in Tamil when discussing a *'Padhigam'* or a *'Pāsūram'* (different poetry forms), instead of asking 'How many stanzas are there?', we ask 'How many Adis (steps) are there?'. Here the word 'Adi' (step) refers not to a part of the stanza but to the whole stanza. Similarly if we take a kirthana (a song), when there are several 'Charanams' (stanzas towards the end), we ask how many 'adis' (steps)? Here is another interesting thing. If it is a *slōkā* we say Padham, Padham etc. If it is a song/kīrthana we say 'Charanam'. Just as Padham, charanam too denotes the feet, the steps.

When we want to move step-by-step, we say '*Padhē Padhē*'. Because it is also about moving step-by-step in bhakthi and progress through each *slōkā*, we can keep it as '*Shatpadhī*'

The Mystery of the Pun

There is a pun in this. Padham means feet/leg is it not? *Shatpadhī* means a 'six-legged' creature.

We might think 'What is this six-legged creature? It is strange!' Man has two legs. Animals are four-legged. There is an eight legged insect. A snake has no legs. A centepede has countless legs. What is this six-legged creature?

It is the Bee. A bee has six legs. It has 'Shat-Padham'. Therefore, *Shatpadhī* means the bee. *Shatpadhī sthōthrā* is the 'Bee *Sthōthrā*'.

Why is this *sthōthrā*, which has six Padhams (*slōkās*), called the bee *sthōthrā*? What is the pun in this? The *Āchāryā* unfolds this in the last (seventh) *slōkā*. A person who narrates a story, creates a suspense in the beginning, and does not unravel it immediately. He keeps it under cover, kindles our interest and eagerness and finally unties the knot of the suspence. Similarly, the *Āchāryā* who gave this *slōkā* the title '*Shatpadhī*', explicitly reveals only in the end as to why he named it the *Shatpadhī*. People who are students of literature, those who are involved in bhakthi *Granthās*, and connoisseurs will understand this right in the beginning, even if he has not revealed it.

Let me start with the first *slōkā*. In the first *slōkā*, the *Āchāryā* teaches us as to what are the various things we must ask and pray for.

What do we Pray for?

For what should we pray to god? There are differences of opinion on this.

In the world we live in, we have innumerable sufferings, problems, mental stress, sorrows physical ailments, mental agony, financial problems, fear, poor reputation - we suffer from innumerable things like this. We seek various ways to get over these. We go to the doctor because we are not well. When we have financial trouble we go to some one who can give us the money on loan. We go to the *Mānthrika* (some one who uses *Manthrās*) to ward off troubles from ghosts and evil spirits. We approach government officials for sorting out various kinds of issues. Even if we go to various people to solve our problems, we also pray to god to rid us of these problems. We pray to god that the people whom we approach to solve our problems should be supportive of us. The doctor just dispenses or prescribes medicines. It should be effective is it not? We pray to god for that too. We go to some one seeking a favour. However, what happens if we are involved in an accident on the way? We pray to god that such things should not happen.

Some people think that praying to god for all these mundane things is not right. 'Our problems are a result of our *Karmās*. It is god who has punished us by giving us these difficulties, and reduces our *Karmā*. Therefore, we should not at all pray to him for such worldly things. God himself knows what he should give us, when and how. Hence, we should not pray to him for anything. Is it not joyful just to think of him? That happiness and joy is enough. We must think of him just for that joy alone. The fruit of bhakthi is the satisfaction and happiness of engaging in bhakthi. Using bhakthi as an instrument to fulfil our little desires, instead of deriving the higher satisfaction is very wrong. Therefore, we should never pray asking for this or that. If at all we can pray for something, it should be only for our self-purification'

This is the view some people hold.

Bhagawān's View

What *Bhagawān* himself says is our source of authority. What does god say regarding this issue in the *Gītā*?

Krishṅa Paramāthmā says this in the *Gītā*:

Chaturvidhā Bhajanthē Mām Janā: Sukruthinō: Arjuna
arthō Jijnāsur: Arthārthī Jnānī cha bharatarshbha

' There are four types of people who worship me or pray to me. Who are these four types of people? The first one is an *ārtan*. Second, a *Jijnāsu*. Third, *Arthārthi*. Fourth, *Jnānī*.'

Ārtan (mentioned first),means some one who is suffering or in sorrow. He is subject to mental agony, and physical ailments. Disease, pain, poverty, unending problems, mental stress, all of this is part of *'ārti'*. He prays to god to overcome these problems and reduce the burden of sorrow and sadness ' Lord, please unload this burden from me'.

Who is the second category of Bhaktha? He is the '*Jijnāsu*'. He is the *sādhakā* seeking '*Jnānā*' - knowledge, puts in effort to acquire '*Jnānā*'. He prays to god, because it is *Bhagawān* who sows the seeds of *Jnānā*; it is *Ambāḻ* who feeds the milk of *Jnānā*. Either he might pray like the *ārthan* asking *Bhagawān* 'Give me *Jnānā*'. Or else, he might just meditate upon the divine form and auspicious attributes of *Bhagawān*. Apart from that in itself being a bliss, it would hold the reins on his mind and protect it from dissipation. The *Āchāryā* too recommended various Upāsanās to achieve this 'Chittha Aikāgriyam' (concentration of the mind). The *Jijnāsu* does not even have to ask 'Give me knowledge'. He just has to meditate on the *Bhagawān* and be happy. His mind will achieve concentration and will on its own get dissolved in the *Nirguńa*, *Arūpa* (formless), 'Sathya' of the *Bhagawān*. *Jnānā* is the state, where there is no separate consciouness of the *Jīvāthmā*, which merges with the ultimate truth. In such a state, there is no *pūjā*, no meditation. The *Jijnāsu* prays to god to reach that stage only.

Arthārthi is the third. *Arthārthi* means some one desirous of wealth. Artham means wealth that is money. Arthi is some one who is praying for it.

The one who does not have money is included in the first category of the one who suffers. However, the *Arthārthi* - the one who is mentioned separately here- is not some one suffering from poverty. He does not find it difficult to lead a normal life. Yet he is not satisfied with what he already has; he prays to God for more things and comforts. There are many amongst us, who are like this. A sub-collector wants promotion as a collector and prays for it. The collector wants a post that has authority over all the districts and prays for it. In the word Artham, we include not only money, but also position, power, reputation, fame etc.

He mentioned the *Jnāni* as the fourth. He says that even the *Jnāni* worships Him. I had earlier mentioned that once you become a *Jnāni* there is no distinction between the *Bhagawān* and the Bhaktha. The *Jnāni* himself dissolves in the single ultimate truth; thereafter *pūjā*, meditation etc stop. Why am I quoting the *Bhagawān* here to say that the *Jnāni* too is His Bhaktha? It is true that in the *Jnāna Samādhi* stage the Bhaktha is not different from the *Bhagawān*. However, the *Jnāni* does not always remain in the 'nirvikalpa *Samādhi'*, without any awareness about the external around him. There are times when he has awareness about outside (or it seems so to the outside world). At such times, the *Jnāni* enjoys the sport of the very same formless/attributeless thing, with which he had submerged. (Which now has a form, various attributes and is managing the world). *Vāsudēva* had said in the *Gītā* '*Vāsudēva* sarvamith*i*'. The *Jnāni* sees the *Paramāthmā* in everything he sees and enjoys it saying 'This too is its form, its sport'. The *Āchāryā* had said *'Nandhathi Nandathi Nandathi Ēva'* three times in Bhaja *Gōvindām*. Likewise, the *Jnāni* is in bliss and all the time enjoying the '*Paramāthma Rasa*' in everything he sees. Even when the *Jnāni* is not in the Nirvikalpa *Samādhi* (without any awareness of the outside world), but is conscious of the outside world, everything outside and inside is the same for him. As the *Vēdhā* says, it is the same *Nārāyanā*, *Vāsudēva* inside and outside. He will have an inner consciousness that it is the same *Paramāthmā* who is present everywhere.

The *Jnāni* does not need to attain anything. There is no need for him to pray for this or that. He is full of love towards the *Paramāthmā* without any reason or prayer (asking for anything) because he can only love everything. This indeed is the Bhakthi of the purest kind. *Sukāchāryā*, a *Brahmam Jnāni* himself calls this *'Ahaithukī Bhakthi'* (bhakthi without reason) in *Bhāgavatha*. If somebody were to attack the *Jnāni* with a knife, even then he would not pray (for anything). Even then, the realisation that 'I am not the body, but *Āthmā* only' would not have left him. Even at that stage he would remain full of love and Bhakthi, towards the *Bhagawān*, without any prayers.

We might ask, 'Where is this exalted form of Bhakthi? And where is the Bhakthi of the Artan who prays to get rid of his problems? Even worse is the Bhakthi of the *Arthārthi* who keeps asking for more, even when he has everything. It seems so wrong to even call it Bhakthi'.

The *Bhagawān* speaks about this Artan and the *Arthārthi* in the same manner as he speaks about the *Jijnāsu* who is seeking *Jnānā*, and the *Jnāni* who has already attained *Jnānā*. He says that these two (Artan and *Arthārthi*) too worship Him. Not only that; He praises these four types of people as '*Sukhruthina: Janā:*' That is, people who have performed *puṇya* (virtuous acts). Two *slōkās* later, He again says that these four *Bhakthās* are indeed praiseworthy.

'Udhārā: Sarva Ēvaithē'.

Why did He say that?

The question is: Why did *Bhagawān* refer not only to the *Jnāni* and the one who seeks *Jnānā*, but also to the one who prays to Him to overcome worldly miseries, and the one seeking even more comforts, as His *Bhakthās*? Why did he call them, 'those who have performed *puṇya*, praiseworthy' etc.?

Justification for Worldly Prayers

We face several difficulties in life in this world. It is of course commendable if we can ignore all the suffering saying 'It is God's will' and we can engage in Bhakthi towards *Bhagawān*, just for His sake. However, who amongst us in fact is able to remain this way in our daily life? A *Māyā* controls this entire world. Even the *Āchāryā* has said *'Maha Māyā Viswam Bramayasi'*. That *Māyā* manipulates us. We keep thinking that the world is real; our body is real, and lead our lives in that belief. We suffer if there is failure, disrepute, disease, ailment, debt and financial burden. If we do not suffer like this, then it is nice. If not today, some day we must not suffer like this and understand *Māyā* as *Māyā*. We must lead a life of detachment. We must keep making efforts for it from now itself. Whether we are able to do that or not, let that be aside. However, we suffer today, here and now because we have a problem. Does it not pain if a thorn pierces the flesh? Do we not rant in high fever? If there is a problem at home, a fight in the office, some insult somewhere, does it not gnaw us from the inside? Don't we have to run around to fulfil our duties and responsibilities towards the family?

Do we not face disappointment when we do not get what we want? What do we do at such times? Even if we want to console our mind thinking that all this is *Karmā*, and continue doing only our duty, and remain light without any expectations, (as the *Bhagawān* says in the *Gītā*), there is this gnawing feeling in the mind, that does not allow us to remain so. What do we do? We believe that that there is a God, He is managing the entire universe, He is ruling the world according to the laws of Dharma. Even though He rules according to the law of Dharma, He is the embodiment of compassion.

He forgives all our misdeeds and is the ocean of mercy. The *Mahāns* have sung about him in this manner. Has He not caught us in this cover of *Māyā*? What is wrong if we pray to him to dispel all our miseries in this world? After all we are living in this world. This is one opinion.

There are very few who remain like the water on the lotus leaf unaffected by anything in the thought 'Whatever way things are, so be it'. Even those who yearn to be like this some day, are very rare indeed. Ninety percent of the people are they who suffer from problems of the world and who pray that they should be able to overcome these problems. God has the power and the right to sort out all their problems. He certainly has the kindness and compassion required for it. Therefore praying unto him and sharing our problems with Him and praying to Him is very right; this is the opinion held by some others.

What they say is this. 'God has given you a body, a family. You have the responsbility to look after this well. It is your duty. Don't you try to do this by going to your doctor or boss or money-lender or any one else who can help? So what is wrong if you approach God who is above all this? Even if those who can help you are to be well disposed towards you, is it not God who will make it happen? Therefore, before falling at somebody else's feet, fall at His feet. When you attain the maturity of not falling at anybody's feet for sorting out all these worldly problems, then you don't need to fall at God's feet for the same thing,' they say.

'We cannot achieve anything; *Īswarā-Śakthi* is above everything'. Is this not the belief with which the Artan (the one who is suffering) prays to God? Is this not a good attitude? We can assume therefore that God has called such people too as 'Sukruthina:', 'Udhārā:' (those who have virtouous acts, worthy of praise), because they possess this commendable attitude.

If a man, who is always conscious of 'I', realises at some time that he cannot achieve anything without His Grace, believes in this, becomes humble, submissive and prays to God, it is indeed commendable. Let it be for fulfilling worldly desires or let it be for any other reason, we must say that praying to God with the belief that He is bigger than all of us is the right thing to do. *Bhagawān* has said in the *Gītā* (7-11) that 'I am the desires of people which are not against Dharma'

Dharmā Viruddhō Bhūthēshu Kamō(a)smi Bharatharshabha

We should not desire anything that is 'Adharmic' (that is not in line with the laws of Dharma). If the desires are reasonable and in line with Dharma even *Bhagawān* would accept such desires in that stage.

Then the question arises: 'Fine. What do you have to say about the *Arthārthi*, who keeps praying for more even though he has adequate comforts? How can we include him amongst *bhakthās*?'

Whatever is an absolutely necessity to lead a (simple) life, not keeping even a little bit over and above that is the right thing to do. The *Dharma Śāsthrās* say that we must restrict our needs to things without which we cannot be alive. This is the highly laudable principle of 'Aparigraham'. Hence if some one has adequate resources to lead a (reasonable life) and yet he prays for more from God, that is indeed wrong. Therefore, if one has enough wealth (artham) to lead a comfortable life and yet he is praying to God for more, he is indeed greedy; therefore it is wrong. Why does *Krishṅa Paramāthmā* include him too in the four types of *Bhakthās*? Perhaps we can think of it this way.

We need to carry out a lot of social and charitable work in this world. We need to renovate a temple and perform *Kumbhābhishēkam* for it. We have to build schools and hospitals. We need to build orphanages. We have to protect *Vēdhic* Scholars. We need to do so many such good things. We need a lot of money for all of these. Where will the money come from? Only if we have kind hearted weathy men who have enough money over and above their expenses, would we get funds for these projects. Is it not? If an *Arthārthi* prays to *Bhagawān* not for himself but to donate the excess over his needs, we can assume that *Bhagawān* would accept such a prayer.

Even during the period when the *Varṅaśrama Dharma* was practised properly, the *Śāsthrās* prescribed Aparigraham for the Brahmin and ordained that he should not cross the seas. The same Shastra suggested that the *Vaiśya* should 'brave crossing the oceans to make money'. What was the reason? Only if they earn money that way, would several charitable causes get support. In the process of doing so if they indulged in a little bit of luxury, let it be. The charity they give will compensate for this 'dosha' (imperfection). As they keep on giving, they might on their own start disliking luxuries. Then their wishes would be more to help others than to seek comfort for themselves. Even if he were to acquire a bungalow for himself, he might feel like accommodating ten poor people in it. If he has one car, it might occur to him to let others use it and thus help them.

It is not necessary to be a *Jnāni* or a *Jijnāsu*. Even if one is, an Artan or an *Arthārthi* it was fine. It was enough if one believed in God and went to him. His prayers will elevate him little by little. Initially even if he prayed for a lot of wealth and influence, in course of time such desires will diminish. Thereafter it might occur to him to pray only for '*Jnāna Vairāgya*' (knowledge and self-discipline) rather than for alleviation of problems, suffering, disease etc. Then even this prayer might stop. It would be the highest state of sheer joy derived out of bhakthi.

Thus, there are grounds for justifying worldly prayers.

Towards the end of the *Āchāryā*'s '*Soundarya* Lahar*i*' there is a *slōkā* - '*Sāraswathyā Lakshmyā*'. It is clear from that *slōkā* that *Ambāl* grants literacy, wealth, attractive physical appearance and such worldly things in the early stages. Subsequently She helps eliminate attachments of various kinds and finally delivers the *Paramānandā* (highest bliss). Hence, it seems that there is nothing wrong in making in worldly prayers up to a certain stage.

If we create the habit of praying to God somehow or the other, in course of time it will lead to prayers only for '*Āthma Abhivruddhi*' (development of the Self).

Unfulfilled Prayer and Atheism

Do we get all the worldly things we pray for? Not necessarily. Some prayers are fulfilled. Some others are not fulfilled. But we do not let go of God because they were not fulfilled. Nor do we let go of our Bhakthi. Even if we pray for some other benefit, we continue our Bhakthi although we do not get the desired results. It is because we realise the joy of bhakthi even in our little devotion.

Many people come to see me. They come with various prayers. They want some problem solved. Daughter must get married. Son must get a job. Disease and suffering must be overcome. Case in court must be won. There are several such prayers. Does every one get all the prayers answered? No. Yet their affinity and respect does not vanish. They continue to come to me, in spite of that. Some how we seem to know that we do not deserve to get everything we pray for. Therefore, even if prayers are not answered, we do not give up on God.

Very few became atheists because their prayers were not answered. Mostly atheists are by nature that way (non-believers). There are very few who have become atheists because they were disappointed that their bhakthi did not yield them the benefits they desired. Even if one starts engaging in Bhakthi seeking worldly benefits, it is never destroyed. It may not grow or become mature. But it is never destroyed completely.

That is why *Krishńa Paramāthmā* says

'If you are not a *Jnāni* or *Jijnāsu* it is fine. Are you coming to me as an Artan or an *Arthārthi*? Even that is fine. You have trusted me and come to me for some reason or the other. Is it not? Therefore you too are a bhaktha.' So saying, he includes with great compassion the Artan and the *Arthārthi* too as *Bhakthās*.

Praying for Āthma Śrēyas

Even if we do not pray for any worldly things, until the time we truly attain the stage 'We have no wants; we do not have to pray for anything', we must keep praying to *Bhagawān* for *Āthma Srēyas* (*Āthmic* well-being). That (by itself) will give us relief for our yearning. *Bhagawān* knows as to what is required for our *Āthma-Abhivruddhi* (*Āthmic* development). He would give it without our asking. All that is true; yet we do get a certain relief when we place before to Him our own problems. The *Āchāryā* explains in the first *Shatpadhī slōkā* about all that we should pray for to attain *Āthma-Śrēyas.*

In *'Subrahmañya Bhujangam'* our *Āchāryā* talks about getting relief from all ailments because of '*Senthil Nathā's*' pathra-*vibhūthi mahimā.* There he demonstrates for the *Ārti* how to do Bhakthi. If we take *'Kanakadhāra Sthavam'*, the *Āchāryā* prays to *Mahālakshmi* 'Dhadhyath *Dhraviñambudhārām*' 'make wealth rain like the clouds would rain water'. It seems as if he has composed it is to show the *Arthārthi* how to pray.

In *Shatpadhī slōkā*, he is neither an *Ārti* nor an *Arthārthi.* Here he shows how to pray as a *Jijnāsu*, the *sādhakā* yearning for jnānā.

Vishñu for Jnānā Also

Mahā Vishñu is the one who rules this world presides over all its activities. Therefore, let him give his blessings to the *Ārti* and *Arthārthi.* Is it that he cannot move further and grant '*Jnānā*', '*Vairāgya*' etc? That is not true at all. The Adhvaithis pay obeisance to Him first amongst the *Brahmam Vidhyā Āchāryā*s '*Nārāyañam Padhma Bhuvam'*. The same *'Lōka Pālaka'* is also the first *Āchāryā* for the Thathva (philosophy) that follows at the end of the *lōka vyavahārā* (worldly transactions). Therefore, we can pray to him for *Jnānā* too.

Probably the *Bhagavadhpādhā* wanted to clear the misconception amongst people who think 'It is *Śiva* who grants *Jnānā*, Mukthi etc. We have to approach *Mahā Vishñu* only for worldly transactions.' As if to educate such people, he prays for the prelimenary things necessary for '*Chittha Śuddhi'* in the first *Shatpadhī slōkā*. He shows that *Mahā Vishñu* grants 'Iham-Param, *Bhōgam-Jnānam*'. In the first *slōkā*, he particularly shows how to pray to him for *Jnānā*.

Not just in *Shatpadhī* but in several other *slōkās* too the *Āchāryā* has prayed to *Mahā Vishṅu* as the '*Jnāna Dhāthā*' (the one who gives knowledge). In '*Bhaja Gōvindām*' that he composed for '*Jnāna Vairāgya*', he prays to *Gōvindā*, is it not? In the '*Harimīde*' *sthōthrā*, it is all about Adhvaitha. He ends each *slōkā* in it as *'Tham Samsāra Dhwāntha Vināsam Harim Īdē'* meaning 'I pray unto Hari who banishes the darkness that is *Samsāra*'. There are several other examples like this.

To Set Right the Mind

Unless the mind is set right, nobody can be happy. Hence, the *Āchāryā* starts the *Shatpadhī sthōthrā* with a prayer to help us achieve that. Whatever might be the external comforts, only if the mind is well, will those be useful. Otherwise, it will be only sorrow, tears, fear and confusion. If the mind is the way it ought to be, and all the external comforts are missing, even then we will not perceive any difficulty. Then we can for ever be happy - sad*ānanda*- like what Appar *Swāmigaḻ* said. 'Happiness, no sorrow ever'.

What do we mean by the mind being all right? The mind is constantly chasing something or the other. 'Want this. Want that. Our current comforts are not enough. Want more wealth, position, fame etc'. That is, the mind is for ever dissatisfied, discontented. Does it know how to be contented, even if it gets what it wants? No. It creates some new wants and starts chasing that (all over again). If the mind remains contented and satisfied without such yearning and chasing, it means that the mind is all right. Desire, the discontentment and disappointment that follows, enmity, envy, sorrow - as long as these are there even a crorepathi or a great scholar cannot be peaceful or happy. It is like what *Thyāgarājā* said '*Sānthamu Lēkha Soukyamu Lēdhu*' (Telugu); and what *Krishṅa Paramāthmā* said *Asānthasya Kuthā: Sukham*. It seems *Thyāgarājā* composed his song keeping in mind what

Krishṅā said. Both of them say that there is no real Sukham (happiness) without the peace of mind created by contentment.

A vessel looks beautiful from the outside. Yet if it has four tiny holes at the bottom, even if you fill it with nectar, all of it will be lost because of leakage. Is it not? Similarly, it might seem from outside, that everything is fine with us. We may have plenty of money, education and worldly comforts. Yet if we have four small holes like discontent, anger, envy and tears, not visible to the eye, we cannot hold the nectar called happiness, within.

That is why the *Āchāryā* has shown in the very beginning of the *Shatpadhī sthōthrā*, that we must get rid of the pressure arising out bad feelings, impurities, and make it pure. He has shown that if we pray to the *Bhagawān* that way, we can achieve that because of His compassion.

Avinayam Apanaya Vishṅō
Dhamaya Mana: Šamaya Vishya Mruga-Thrushṅam
Bhūtha Dhayām Visthāraya
Thāraya Samsāra Sāgaratha:

This is the first *Shatpadhī slōkā.*

It starts first with 'Avinaya Apanaya'. All of us know the word 'Vinaya'. If we add the letter 'A' in front of Vinaya, the meaning is the exact opposite. Vinaya is about being humble, respectful, polite etc. Avinaya is about arrogance, disrespect etc. Apanaya means 'may you remove, separate'.

We use the 'Upanayanam'. Upa - near. Nayanam means taking it/leading it. It means performing the thread ceremony of a young boy and taking him close to his Guru. Bringing something close to the other is 'Upanayana'. 'Apanayana' is the exact opposite of it. That is removing something from where it is, Apanayana. We have ego, arrogance, (Avinaya) etc. The *Āchāryā* prays to *Sakshāth* Sri *Mahā Vishṅu* to remove that (rid it) from us. This is the beginning of the '*Shatpadhī' sthōthrā.*

'*Vishṅō* means Hey *Vishṅu*!' He addresses the *Bhagawān* directly and prays to Him. He did not separate people like us from himself and prays on our behalf 'remove the people's *dhōshās*-imperfections'. He behaves as if he too has all our *dhōshās* (imperfections), and prays as if he is praying for himself. He does not point out whether it is for himself or the people of the world. He starts in general with 'Remove the lack of Vinaya'.

When the *Āchāryā* prays 'Remove Avinaya' it really means 'Instil Vinaya (humility)'. We already have 'Avinaya'; what we do not have is 'Vinaya'. That is why he is not asking for something new, which is not there. Instead he is praying that He removes something, that already exists and is causing harm - 'Remove Avinaya'.

Humility, the Most Important Virtue

These days there is a lot of mention about tradition, sophistication, culture etc. When we talk about these qualities, we do not focus on Vinaya as an important part of it. In early days when they talked of culture, they thought of Vinaya as its most important characteristic. There is a lot of connection between 'Culture' and 'Kalv*i*' (Tamil) (education). We can easily make this out because 'cul'/kal is common to it. It was the considered opinion that the educated were cultured and sophisticated. Education here is not about literacy - reading and writing. Education is about acquiring knowledge about good things. It is known as *Vidhyā*. The real purpose of *Vidhyā* is Vinaya, being humble in the thought. 'We still have to learn so much more' as opposed to 'I know everything'.

In those days the *śishyā* (student) was humble towards his Guru(teacher), his education, *Bhagawān* and towards everyone in the world. That is why he was able to earn '*Āthma Vidhyā*' as much as he wanted. There was a system that during *Gurukulavāsa*, the *śishyā* had to go from house to house and seek alms saying '*Bhavathi Bhikshām Dēhi*'. He had to do this even if was the son of a very rich man. The main intention was to instil humility in him.

Vinaya was the first lesson that the Guru taught his students. Is it something that one can impart just by teaching? He earned the respect of his students by possessing the '*Āthma-guṅās*' (qualities) and leading an exemplary life himself. Today it is like the rope being weak and the pot full of holes when drawing water from a well.

Similarly, the King too paid special attention to instilling humility in his subjects (as much as he paid attention to their welfare in other aspects). In the *Śāsthrās* when they talk about the qualities of a king what gets the first mention is Vinaya.Then come '*Rakshaṅam*', '*Paraṅam*' etc. '*Paraṅam*' is about helping his people and supporting them to do their work, earn, and lead a comfortable life. '*Rakshaṅam*' is protecting them from internal strife, external wars etc. While a government considers only defence & welfare as its principal duties these days, according to *śāsthrās Vinayadhāna* is the thing that take precedence. That is, the king must help his people to be humble. How do we do that? We do that through proper education, good advice, adherence to religious practices and devotion towards God.

Vinaya is a combination of several qualities. Humility, respect, gentle manners, giving in for others, absolutely no arrogance. True education must instil this Vinaya.

That is why the student, *śishyā* was called '*Vinēyan*'. He who has 'Vinaya' is '*Vinēyan*'. They preferred using the expression '*Vinēyan*' instead of student or *śishyā* (in referring to a student).

Śankarā, his Disciples, and Humility

Padmapadhāchāryā who is the *śishya* of our *Bhagavadhpādhā* has composed a *slōkā* on him(his guru). It starts with

'Yath vakthra mānasa sāra:. I am not discussing its full meaning here. There is one expression '*Vinītha Vinēya Brungā:*'. That is what is relevant to our subject.

How is *Ādhi Śankara Bhagavadhpādhā*'s mind? *Padmapadāchāryā* who was with him throughout describes this in this *slōkā*. It is broad and wide without a limit, clear and cool. Apparently, the *Āchāryā*'s mind is like *Mānasa Sāras* - the lake in Himalayas described by every one as being big, very pure and clear. We cannot see the mind, we can only see the face. The face is the mirror of the mind. They say the face is the index of the mind. We might perhaps purposely don an expression, which blocks the face from showing what is in the mind. For *Mahāpurushās* like the *Āchāryā*, the beauty of the mind will be transparent in the face. Therefore, Sri *Śankara Bhagavadhpādhā*'s face too is like his mind. Clear, pure and big like the *Mānasa Sarōvar*. If there is a pond, it must have lotus. What is the lotus in the pond that is the *Āchāryā*'s face? His mouth which is constantly speaking about high philosophy and provides solace with great compassion to the people coming to him yearning for help, is that lotus. There must be honey from the lotus, is it not? What is the honey that flows from the *Āchāryā*'s mouth? Is it not obvious? The *Bhāshyās* meant for elevation of the world, that flow from his mouth is that honey. Initially he only spoke out his *Bhāshyās* - for the people of his time. Later he wrote the *Bhāshyās* for the future generations like us. '*Bhāsh*' means to speak; not to write. We even refer to conversation as '*Sambhāshaṇai*', is it not?

In the *slōkā* that starts with 'Yathra Vakthra', 'Vakthra' means face. Face is the *Mānasa Sāras*. The *Bhāshyās* that emanate from the mouth in that face, is the honey from the lotus in that *Sāras*. However, in the *slōkā* the face is compared to the *sāras* and the *Bhāshyās* to the honey from the lotus *(Bhāshyāravinda* Makaranda). The comparison is direct: face to *Mānasa Sāras* and *Bhāshyās* to the honey. It does not say that the mouth is the lotus in the pond. There is no word there to refer to the mouth. Because the *Bhāshyās* are referred to as Aravinda Makarandam, we ourselves have to guess that the mouth is the lotus from which the honey flows. A reason for this occurs to me.

There is something interesting in Sanskrit and Tamil. There is no separate word for the word mouth, in Sanskrit. Words like 'Mukham', 'Vakthram', 'Vadhanam', '*Ānanam*', '*Āsyam*' etc that denote the meaning which is face, is the same one which is also used to mean the mouth. If we see Tamil, there is a word for mouth; none for the face. Mukham is a Sanskrit word. '*Mūnji*' is a colloquial term but is not part of the literary language. Sanskrit does not have mouth; Tamil does not have face!

As a result, in the olden days students from the Sanskrit *Ghatikāsthānas* and the Tamil schools Apparently used to tease each other. (These were friendly taunts at each other; not fighting factions. Yet it does indicate that even in those days such foolish tendencies existed.) The Tamil student would taunt the Sanskrit student 'Man without a mouth' (In Tamil it means an animal that cannot speak). The Sankrit student in turn would taunt 'Faceless person'!

Vakthram means face as well as mouth. Once Vakthram is used to mean face, thereafter using it again to mean mouth would be seen to be duplication. Perhaps it is for this reason that *Padmapādhā* left it for us to guess.

Poets compare the face, eyes, feet and hands to lotus. '*Mukhāmbhōjām*', '*Nayanakamalam*', '*Pādhapadmam*', 'Kara

Aravindam' are expressions they use. *Padmapadāchāryā* who has the word lotus in his name, does not compare the *Āchāryā*'s face to a lotus. Instead, he calls it *Mānasa Sāras* and calls the *Bhāshyās* that he teaches, as the honey flowing from the lotus. He does not specifically say that the lotus is the mouth. However, he implies that meaning. *Bhāshyam* is all about philosophy. It is generally tough like a rock. That very philosophy flows like honey that is easy to drink; because it emanates from the *Āchāryā*'s lotus like beautiful gentle mouth.

Adhvaitha, which is the ultimate meaning of the *Bhāshyās*, is the essence of the honey. Apparently, bees (which are the *S̄ishyās*) come in swarms to drink this essence. Here instead of referring to *S̄ishyās* as *S̄ishyās*, he uses the word '*Vinēya*'; meaning somebody with Vinaya. That is humility and respect.

Just as there is a refernce to the lotus and the bees in this *slōkā*, there is one more *slōkā* about the *Āchāryā*, which makes such a reference. This *slōkā* inscription is in a stone tablet, which is about eight hundred years old. If you listen to where this stone inscription was found, you will be even more surprised. It was found in Cambodia!

This stone inscription found in a foreign country refers to the *Āchāryā* as 'Bhagavad *S̄ankarā*'. In our country, we refer to him only as '*Bhagavadhpādhā*'. The Cambodians however, have gone a step above and have called him '*Bhagawān*'. In this *slōkā*, the *Āchāryā*s feet are described as lotus. It says 'Anghri Pankajam'. All the scholars in the world, bar none, have kept their heads on the lotus feet (of the *Āchāryā*) declaring that they would never leave them. ('*Nis̄ s̄ēsha*' is the expression used in the *slōkā*). The inscription says that '*Bhagawān S̄ankarā* whose lotus feet were swamped by the bees which are the heads of all the scholars.

Nis̄ s̄ēsha - Suri - Mūrdhāli - Mālā- Līdāngi- Pankajāth

What I mentioned first is composed by *Padmapādhā* about our *Bhagavadhpādhā*. Here it does not refer to the face or feet of the *Bhagavadhpādhā* as a lotus. Instead, it refers to the *Bhāshyā* as the honey from the lotus. Apparently, the *Śishyās* who are the bees are drinking 'Adhvaitha Honey' flowing from the lotus that is his mouth. Here instead of saying *Śishyās*, it describes them as '*Vinītha Vinēya Brungā:*'.

Vinītha means people well trained in good disciplines (habits). *Brungā*: is a swarm of bees. Instead of *Śishyā*, he has used the term *Vinēyan*.

In the Cambodia stone inscription it says *'Nis sēsha Suris'* - all the scholars, barring none, are prostrating at the lotus feet of the *Āchāryā* as a swarm of bees, by keeping their heads on his feet. 'Murdha' means head. 'Murdhali Mala' means '*Alimālā*' made of *Mūrdhas*. *Alimālā* is a swarm of bees. Ali means a bee.

Padmapādhā mentioned only the honey that is the *Bhāshyā*, without mentioning the mouth that is the lotus. The Cambodia stone inscription mentions lotus feet but has left out the honey that is the *Bhāshyā*. It says all the scholars barring none, prostrate at his lotus feet with their heads as the bees. Therefore, we can construe that they are not prostrating at his feet with Bhakthi as ordinary people. We can intepret that they are expressing their Bhakthi towards the *Āchāryā* because they enjoy the '*Bhāshyā* honey'. It is not appropriate to say that the *Bhāshyā* Honey flowed from the lotus feet. Therefore, it is only mentioned as '*Pādha* Padma' (lotus feet) the *Bhāshya Makarandā* is left for us to guess.

Appayya *Dīkshithar* has composed a *slōkā* called *'Ādhikadha bitha Purvāchāryan'* on our *Āchāryā*. In that he says the Adhvaitha *Sūkthā* flow emanating from the *Āchāryā*'s mouth, which is the lotus, will banish our miseries of birth (and death). *Sūkthi* is Su-Ukthi. It means a statement of great import, value.

Ādhigatha bidhā Pūrvāchāryānupethya Sahasradhā
Saridiva Mahīnbhāgān Samprāpya śouri Padhōdhgathā
Jayathi Bhagavadhpādha Srīmanmukhāmbhuja Nirgathā
Jananahārāñī Sūkthir Brahmādhvaika Parāyañā

Here it has referred to the lotus mouth and the *Bhāshyā Upadēsā* flow from it. There is no word here however, to indicate that it is a flow of honey. What else will flow from the lotus other than honey? It is hardly difficult to guess this!

Thus, we see that in one there is no reference to mouth but there is reference to Honey. In another, there is a swarm of bees without reference to mouth and honey. In the third, there is a reference to mouth but there is an oblique reference to honey. What is enjoyable is that in all the three it is easy to guess what is left without mention.

Here *Padmapādhā* referring to the *Sishyās* as *Vinēya* is what is relevant to our (*Shatpadhī*) subject.

What is surprising about our *Āchāryā* is this. Not only were his *Sishyās* humble *Vinēya*s but as a Jagadguru he was more humble.

It will be known that the *Āchāryā* has composed a *sthōthrā* called '*Soundarya* Lahar*i*'. It is an extraordinary composition for many reasons. It has Bhakthi, lyrical beauty, linguistic flair, philosophical excellence, content regarding Manthra-*Sāsthrās*, metaphorical passages - all of these have no parallel. In addition, it has great 'Mānthric power'. For some one who created such a composition any amount of boasting would be considered legitimate. Did our *Āchāryā* have even iota of arrogance or self-adulation, that he has achieved something extrordinary or outstanding? Not one bit. At the end of '*Soundarya* Lahar*i*', he is the personification of humility and pleads to *Ambāḻ* in an apologetic tone.

'Mother! You are the ocean of sound, ocean of words. I have attempted to describe you in a hundred *slōkās*. Do you know how this is? In *Rāmēswaram*, *Sēthu Thīrtha*, devotees take a handful of water from the *Mahāsamudra* (big ocean) and perform abhishēka for the very same sea. This is like that!'

In the same vein, he gives three more examples with utmost humility.

Thus the *Āchāryā* who is the incarnation of *Paramēswarā*, mingles with us (who have no power, yet we move around without humility), and starts the *Shatpadhī Slōkā* with 'Avinaya Apanaya', (remove my lack of Vinaya). This is just to teach us how to pray.

If we attain humility, that is enough. All the other good qualities will follow. Even Valluvar has said that 'Humility will make one immortal'.

We must practise humility during the school days itself. What does not bend at five, will not bend at fifty. As we grow and we learn several things and we seek several things like youth, status, money, power etc, it is very difficult to get Vinaya (humility). That is why we must train ourselves in Vinaya even young. Calling a student a '*Vinēyan*' in the early days indicates this concept.

In Sikhism

We call a student a '*sishyā*'. A sishy*ā* is some one receiving '*Sikshā*'. A *sishyā* receives instructions from his guru during his *gurukulavāsa*, not only in matters pertaining to his lessons, but also regarding good conduct. *Sikshā* is teaching the subject lessons as well as conduct. Now a days we think of teaching music as *Sikshā*. We call it '*Sangīta Sikshā*'. Or if a judge pronounces a judgment we refer to it as 'Lifetime *Sikshā*'.

Just as how a *sishyā* in gurukula remains obedient and humble towards his guru, a person belonging to a particular religion must demonstrate respect and be bounden to the principles of his religion and its '*Madhāchāryās*' (Religious Preceptors). *Gurunānak* established 'Sikhism' with this view. There are aspects of both Hinduism and Islam in Sikhism. There is a lot of discipline in Islam. Muslims follow their religious practices very strictly and observe their prayers and vows. We cannot say the same thing about others. *Gurunānak* brought in such tough discipline as being most important, for the followers of Sikhism established by him. He believed that the followers of his religion must obey the religious leaders just as the *Śishyā* obeyed his guru in *gurukulavāsa*. That is why he named the head of his religion as 'Guru'. (You might have heard of names like Guru Gobind Singh and others). In keeping with calling the religious leader as Guru, he named the followers of the religion as '*Śishyā*'. The word '*Śishyā*' has morphed to 'Sikh' over the years. In Punjab, where Sikhism prevails widely the akshara 'sha' is prounounced as 'ka' During Vēdha Adhyayana, for example, in *Purusha Sūkthā*, they pronounce '*Havishā*', as '*Havikā*'. Using the same logic, the 'Sha' in *Śishyā* has become 'ka' - thus it has become 'Sikh'. This is my guess. It may be that '*Śikshaka*' has become 'Sikh'. Guru is the *Sikshaka*. Others are *Śishyās*. In North the Cha is modified to Sha, Sa etc. The last aksharas are sailent. Therefore '*Śikshaka*' could also have become 'Sikh'.

Vinaya is the first quality that a man should possess. That is why the *Āchāryā* says 'Avinayam Apanaya'. If Avinaya vanishes, discipline appears on its own.

Two kinds of disciplines

One is to keep the *Indriyās* (senses) under control. That is: The eyes should not see all sorts of things; it should not see things that would cause aberrations in the mind. It must only see good things like a Temple. Similarly, the ear should not hear things that are atheist in thinking. It should only listen to Nāma Sankīrthana, and *Sthōthrās*. The mouth should not consume things that will harm *Chiththa Śuddhi* - such as liquor, meat, onion etc. It should only eat *Prasāds*, and other things that will develop sathvik qualities. The other thing we do with our mouth is to talk. We should not waste our time speaking about useless things, indulging in gossip and in verbal duals. It should be used only to repeat *Bhagawan-nāmā*. The body should not be used to indulge in sensual pleasures. Instead, it should be used to render social service. It must be used to perform *pūjā* (worship), do pradakshina and *namaskāra* (circumambulation in temples and prostrating before God). Thus, controlling the senses to bring them in line with good things and not allowing them to run amock is one kind of discipline. This is called 'Samam', 'Dhamam'. Appar *Swāmigaḻ* has explained how to engage each part of the body in service to God for examples, 'Oh head, bend in obeisance'. Combining 'Dhama' to 'Sama' people often use the expression 'Sama *Dhamādhi*'. 'Dhamam' is about disciplining the mind. In the two kinds of disciplines, one is to merely control the senses from straying to wrong things - that is 'Sama'. Controlling the mind is the discipline of the second kind - 'Dhama', which is to control the very thought that arises inside. (In *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā* it is clearly said 'Control your mind, make it Dhama. Control the mirage that is the sensual pleasures - make that sama'. Keeping this context in mind, His Holiness has given this definition for Sama and Dhama. However, in *Ādhi Śankarā's Vivēka Chūdāmaṇi* in *slōkās* 22, 23 the definitions are exactly the opposite. If we go by the roots of the words both mean 'controlling', 'disciplining'.There is no clear definition of which is what. Therefore keeping the context in mind the explanation by His Holiness is appropriate here)

We may not do anything wrong and we could control the senses. Yet if the mind is imagining wicked things and revelling in evil thoughts then there is no use with external discipline. Dhama means internal discipline.

Achieving this internal discipline however, is very difficult. Only if we practise 'Sama', which is the external discipline, can we get to Dhama, which is internal discipline. Even in the *Gītā* (2-59) *Bhagawān* has said that for one who has foresaken his *Āhārā* (here *Āhārā* is not just food but he refers to all things experienced/consumed and enjoyed by the eyes, ears, nose, mouth and the body) only such objects and the related experiences might be gone. But the *Vāsanā* (taste), arising out of enjoying such experiences, might still remain in his mind. When will the mind become pure without that ruchi (impressions) too? Only when he sees the *Bhagawān* will the experience of external things and the internal desire to experience those things, vanish.

'Then what is right? Does it mean that only when the *Vāsanās* for various things vanish from the mind, we will get '*Paramāthma dharśana*'? Is it that 'Only when you get *Paramāthma dharśana* would the *Vāsanās* for various things vanish from the mind?' Is it not somewhat like saying, 'Once you are married you will be rid of your lunacy. Or once you are rid of your lunacy you will be married?'

First, we must have the yearning that our mind must become pure. We must sincerely wish and yearn that 'All the *Vāsanās* and old tastes must completely vanish from the mind.' Even if we have the yearning and the wish, it will not happen easily. In order to achieve that at least externally we must practise not enjoying things through the senses. We must practise Sama in this manner. As we progress in that slowly, we might achieve a little Dhama too, bit by bit. The *Vāsanā* in the mind too might start reducing. It might reduce but not vanish. We will keep slipping from time to time. It is like the human pyramid story. The person who tries to climb to the top will slip often. He will however, never give up. Likewise, we too must be determined and persistent. The *Paramāthmā* will ultimately see our *śraddhā* (sincerity) and antharanga *śuddhi* (inner purity) and grant us His *dharśana*. Either it could be His *Saguṅa, Kāruṅya, Lāvaṅya Rūpa* (a form with attributes, full of compassion and beauty) or it could be a formless experience where we experience His *Jnānānandā* in our *Āthmā* as *Āthmaswarūpa.*

Our *Āchāryā* has kept Sama and Dhama as part of '*Samādhi Shadga Sampath*', the qualities that an *Āthmā Sādhakā* must possess.

The state that relates to 'Sama' is *Sānthi.* The state that relates to Dhama is '*Dhānthi*'. Now all of us know the word *Sānthi.* We may not be familiar with the word *Dhānthi.* Those who know the Swasthi Vachanam of our Mutt might have noticed the term '*Sānthi-Dhānthi-Bhūmnām*' mentioned in the Swasthi. The *Bhagavadhpādhā* prays to the *Bhagawān* for both *Sānthi* and *Dhānthi* in the '*Shatpadhī*' *sthōthrā.*

Before controlling the mind and behaviour one must have the quality to be simple, respectful and humble. Even praying to the *Bhagawān* asking for Sama and Dhama is possible only if there is Vinaya, is it not? That is why he started with 'Avinaya Apanaya'. Thereafter he addresses him as '*Vishṅō*!' And keeping the God next to himself he further says

Dhamaya mana: Samaya Vishaya Mruga Thrushṅam

'I need *Dhānthi*, Dhama for my mind. Grant me that. Control my mind. I need *Sānthi* for my senses, which keep running after the mirage called sensual pleasures. Control that and grant me Sama.'

Now you would have understood what *Dhamaya mana:*' and '*Samaya* Vishaya' mean. Now let me explain what 'Mruga *Thrushṅā*' means.

Mirage

Mruga *Thrushṅā*' means a mirage. Why is this meaning?

There are two words 'Mruga' and *'Thrushṅā'*. Mruga means animal. That is the general meaning. In addition, in Sanskrit the word 'Mruga' means a deer.

A few changes in meaning occur while using Sanskrit words in Tamil. In Tamil Mrugam means an animal in general. Sheep, Buffalo, Donkey, Horse, Deer, Tiger - everything is Mrugam in Tamil. It is not as if this meaning does not exist in Sanskrit.

Yet it is a practice in Sanskrit to use this word to denote a deer. *Paramēśwarā* is called *Mrugapāṅī*, Mrugadhara etc because he holds a deer in his hand. There is another word like this, which is '*Paśu*'. *Paśu* in Tamil is a cow, milk-giving animal. However, in Sanskrit *Paśu* means sheep, cow, horse, donkey, tiger, lion - all the animals. In *particular*, the animal that is sacrificed in yajna is called a '*Paśu*'. Because it is generally the goat that is sacrificed, it is called '*Yajna Paśu*'. Even the cow has that name. The lowest level ordinary man too is a *Paśu*. Because the *Paramāthmā* is above all the *Jīvāthmās* and also has the Bull for his vehicle, holds the deer in his hand we call *Īśwarā* '*Paśupathi'*. He is both a *Mrugapāṅī* and a *Paśupathi*.

In Sanskrit, we refer to all animals with the word Mruga that is specific to deer. As opposed to this, we use the word, *Paśu* that denotes all the animals, to denote only the Cow.

Here in Mruga *Thrushṅā*, Mruga means a deer. *Thrushṅā* means thirst. Thirsting for water. Probably the word thirst might have come from *Thrushṅā*. 'Mruga *Thrushṅā*' means 'A deer's thirst'.

What is the connection between a deer's thirst and a mirage?

There are herds of deer in deserts. They suffer from acute thirst during the summer. Will they get water in the desert?

Let there be no water. If only the herd of deer knows that there is no water in the desert, they will get out of the desert, come to land areas that have water, and save their lives. However, there is an illusion in the desert that prevents them from doing this. There is an appearance that there is water in the desert that has no water at all. That is the Mirage. They explain this in science through reflection and refraction of light. What it is in truth is this. In a vast expanse of land like a desert, when the temperature shoots up, the air becomes light, when they look at things from a distance people see relection in the sand, like they see reflection in water. From a distance, the earth with sand might look like a flowing river. As we approach it, it will move further and further away.

The deer herd in the desert will run after such mirage, thinking it to be real water, become tired and unable to run anymore, and finally die a miserable death not being able to bear the extreme heat. In Sanskrit 'Mruk' means to search, seek, to look for. Something that is constantly running around looking for something is Mruga. Mruga - the deer is one such animal that is constantly chasing the mirage and dying a miserable death in the end.

Adhvaitha *Sāsthrā* mentions that the entire world is a '*Māyā*'. If we ask, 'How is that a *Māyā*? Don't we see everything in the world?' one Adhvaitha grantha says, 'Even the mirage is visible to the eye. Does that therefore become real? Similarly this world too is a mirage.'

Aptness of the Desert Simile

This mirage simile is better than using the simile of a dream for the world. A dream looks real as long as we are seeing it. Only when it is over and we wake up do we realise that it is completely false, and is just the thought of the dreamer alone.

As long as we are in the state of *Ajnānā* this world seems very real. When we get *Jnānā*, we realise 'There is no such thing. It is the

Paramāthma Sathya which has appeared as various kinds of creations in the world'. Therefore we compare *Māyā* to Swapna (dream). 'That is fine. Just as we cannot see anything of the dream after we wake up, the world should not be visible for the *Jnāni*. Yet did not the *Āchāryā*, Sukha *Brahmam* and others who are great *Jnānis* give advice for the elevation of the world? Is it not because they acknowledged to some extent, the presence of this world? When the world itself is not seen, who is to advise whom? What advice to give? If they advised, is it not implied that the world was visible for them? Does it mean that they have not got *Jnānā*?' This might be one thing some might ask. Here the mirage simile answers these issues more appropriately than the dream simile. A man realises that the mirage water is not real water. After that he is still able to see the illusion of the water flowing in the river, is it not? This is not like the dream vanishing after waking up. Even after realising that the mirage water is not real, it is still visible. Therefore, it is possible to warn and stop those who are running after it thinking that it is real water 'Don't run. Even if it looks like water there is no water there'.

'Mruga *Thrushnā*' - A deer's thirst - has become an accepted expression to indicate the mirage which is sought after by the thirsty. It is a figure of speech that appears in the 'Alankara *Sāsthrā*'.

Thirumūlar referred to the pancha *Indriyās* (five senses) as 'five milk yielding animals'. Here the *Bhagavadhpādhā* refers to the *Indhriyās* as deer. 'Just as the deers die a tragic death not being able to bear the heat, after chasing the mirage, each *Indhriyā* is running after short-lined sensual pleasures and getting wasted! Oh! Lord! Please let us not have this suffering. Control the thirst of the senses - *Samaya* mruga *Thrushnām*'. He prays to *Mahā Vishnu* thus.

Worldly life is a desert. Whatever seems like pleasures for the *Indhriyās* (senses) in this world are just mirages.

Once a stretch of land becomes a desert there is no water in it. The illusory water is the mirage. If we find out from geologists as to what was there before it became a desert, it would be fascinating. Geological research explains that land masses which are deserts now were huge masses of water like oceans and seas. If we dig the places which are deserts at present, what are unearthed are bones of huge whales, shells etc which are typically to be found in seas. It is clear therefore that deserts indeed were huge water masses earlier. Whenever there has been a huge earthquake and other massive vibrations, the bottom of the sea has come up in some places and the sea water has remained in between land-locked. Thereafter because of the heat of the Sun, and other changes in nature, after this water has completely dried, these very places have become deserts without a drop of water. So say the geologists.

It was the sankalpa when the world was created that man should live in the land (earth) part. It was possible to grow sufficient grain in it and several rivers to flow. If we think about the creation of this prapancha, it is fascinating and interesting. All this while I have lectured to you that ultimately all of this is an illusion, mirage, a mruga *Thrushṅā*. Just as even the mirage looks very interesting as long as it is visible, *Bhagawān* has made even the *lōkamāyā* very interesting. Here if you have a mountain in one place, there is a valley in another place. In another place, there is a river. Each of this has a meaning, a use. He has created in this world rivers, mountains, plains. He also created various living beings with *Jīva Chaitanya* (life), such as man, animals, birds, water bound creatures, land animals etc. He has inter-connected all of these in the most fascinating way. *Paramāthmā* then plays his sport in the name of Nature.

In His sport sometimes, there are unexpected calamitous results. If everything was fine and predictable then this world would be deemed real is it not? In order that it does not appear so, he creates unusual situations from time to time. That is why we get an earthquake. A volcano erupts. Sometimes parts of the sea become a desert.

In the land meant for man to lead his life there is rain, river, plants etc necessary for him to lead a comfortable life. When a portion of an ocean dries up and joins the land mass, such a desert has no water, no rain, no plant life. Initially it is the *Paramāthmā* who had determined 'This is the ocean. Let there be no under currents here.'. Yet, it is the same place which has now become a desert and combined with the land. He does not change His laws of nature, however. That is why what was once an ocean of water is now a desert without a drop of water.

Sahārā - Sāgaram

Let me share with you my research about deserts. Geologists say that what is *Sahārā* today was once a sea. *Rāmāyaṅa* says that the sons of a king called Sagaran, went digging in the earth and created the sea. Because it was dug by the sons of sagara, the sea was called '*Sāgaram*'. I think Sagara has morphed into *Sahārā*.

Rajasthan in India is one such desert. The Sanskrit word for a desert is '*Maruvādika*'. This is why we call Rajasthanis, 'Marwadi'.

What was once an ocean that nourished life and growth is now a desert. Similarly, the desert that is this worldly life came from the *Jīva Sāra* (essence of life) - the *Paramāthmā*. However, it does not have the '*sāra*' to nourish the *Āthmā*. The mirage such as *kāma*(desire), *krōdha* (anger) etc pull us in different directions, make us run around and ruin us. This is what the *Āchāryā* calls the 'Vishaya Mruga *Thrushṅā*'.

First, he prayed for Vinaya and simplicity. Thereafter he prayed for mental discipline. After that, he prays that senses should not chase different kinds of desires that are mirages and asks that their thirst be controlled.

Why Sānthi after Dhānthi?

First, we achieve external discipline; only then are we able to attain internal discipline of the mind. Why did he (the *Āchāryā*) mention *Dhānthi* first and then *Sānthi*? Because he wanted to convey that even the external discipline is an instrument to achieve internal discipline as the goal. We might control the external organs for many reasons other than the control of the mind. If there is a problem in the eye, they ask you to control your external action - avoid seeing the cinema (for instance). If there is a problem with the intestine, they ask you to stop eating meat. In these examples, controlling the external organs is not prescribed as a means to mental discipline. For the mind to be controlled '*Indhriyā Jaya*' is prescribed for '*Āthma-abhivrudhi.* This goal should not be forgotten; that is why it seems like mind control is mentioned first. Only then external control which is a means to mind control is mentioned.

'Eliminate my unruly Avinaya. Tie my *Indhriyās* that chase the mirage of sensual pleasures.' Sri *Āchāryā* has so far explained what the bhaktha should pray for at a personal level.

If one gets humility, the mind and the *Indhriyās* come under control, and there is no more chasing for small pleasures; he does not need anything else for himself.

For the World's Salvation with Own Salvation

The *Āchāryā* however did not stop the prayer as the means to achieving *mōksha*, only for the self. On one hand, he has said that the whole world is an illusion, a *Māyā*. On the other hand, he has great compassion towards the whole world. He did not call the world an absolute lie; like the son of a barren woman or a rabbit with horns. He called the world is a dream and it is the dream that he called *Māyā*, false. The dream is not an absolute lie like the son of the barren woman or the rabbit with a horn. Things seem real as along as the dream lasts. It seems very real. Yet it becomes false as soon as one wakes up. The *Āchāryā* has called this half-truth kind of thing as the *Māyā*, Mithya, *Prāthibhāsika* Sathya etc. We keep faltering thinking that the world is an absolute truth. It was his Janma Vratha (a mission from birth) to awaken us to become *Jnānis*, to get out of this dream. That is why he travelled the length and breadth of the conutry three times from his very early age, with great compassion for us. He could have sat as an *Āthma Rama*, in a state of *Parama Jnānā* in one place. He did not do that. He did not remain quiet even for a second. He wrote so many commentaries. He composed so many *sthōthrās*. He travelled from place to place and argued (against wrong religious practices). He went from *Kshētra* to *Kshētra* and installed idols of gods, yantras and so on. The reason for all this was his great compassion (towards the world and all of us).

That is why even in this *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā*, while praying to *Mahā Vishnu* he does not stop at 'Avinaya Apanaya, *Dhamaya* Mana: *Samaya* Vishaya Mruga *Thrushnam*' - everything a bhaktha seeks for his own salvation. He continues his prayer and says

Bhūtha Dhayām Visathāraya

He prays 'Oh God! Make me love all the living beings on this earth. Make my compassion spread widely.'.

Here *Bhūtha* means 'Animal Species', 'living beings'. Not only does he want salvation, but he wants salvation for the whole world through his love. That is why he says this.

However enlightened one becomes, it is not enough. We must fill our hearts with compassion and keep doing good for all living beings. The very word '*Śankara*' means some one who does good (for others). The root meaning is Sam- Good. Kara- the one does.

Just as '*Śukhlāmbaradaram*' is known to everyone as a *slōkā* for *Vināyakā*, there would be one *slōkā* that is famous for each deity (although there could be many *slōkās* about them). If we think of Sri Rama, most people would know '*Āpathām* Apa *harthāram*'. For Saraswathi it is '*Yā kundēndhu*'. For *Vishńu*, '*Śanthākāram Bhujaga Śayanam*'. For *Ambā̱l*, 'Sarva *Mangaḻa Mańgalyē*'. Similarly, here is a *slōkā* about the *Āchāryā* which is very famous:

> *Śruthi Smruthi Purāńańam Ālayam Karuńālayam*
> *Namāmi Bhagavadhpādha Śankaram Lōka Śankaram*

First it says he is the abode of *Śruthi* (*Vēdhās*), Smruthi (*Śāsthrās*) and *Purāńās* - meaning a very big intellectual. Then it says that he is a *Karuńālayam* - a temple, an embodiment of compassion. When it ends too, it says he is *Śankara* some one who does good for the welfare of the whole world. *Āchāryā*'s uniqueness is his compassion towards all living beings, kindness towards every one.

The *Āchāryā* is an ocean of knowledge. He is also an ocean of compassion. That is why while he is teaching us to pray, he does not stop at *Āthmā* Abhivriddhi but asks us to pray for '*Bhūtha* Dhaya' (love towards all living beings) as well.

While he prayed 'Spread my love towards all living beings' to *Mahā Vishńu*, he prayed to *Paramēśwarā* in '*Siva* Aparadha Kshamāpana *Sthōthrām*' thus:

> *Prāńinām Nirdhayathvam Mābhūthēvam Mama Paśupathē!*
> *Janma Janmānthارēshu*

(the *slōkā* starts with '*Powrōhithyam*'). In that *slōkā*, he does not pray 'give me these good things'. Instead, he keeps making a list 'These bad qualities should not come to me'. In that list, he says 'Let me not have Nirdhaya (lack of love/compassion) towards living beings, Janma *Janmānthārēshu*'. When he prays to *Īswarā* the *Samhārāmūrthi*, he asks in a negative way - that his lack of compassion to be destroyed. At the same when he prays to the *'Jagath Paripālana Mūrthi'* that is *Mahā Vishṇu* he says

Bhūtha Dhayām Visathāraya

Fine, what else should we pray for?

'May You Take Me to the other Shore!'

Thāraya Samsāra Sāgaratha:

The *Āchāryā* completes the first *slōkā* with these words.

What it means is 'Take me ashore from the *Samsāra Sāgara*'.

Thārakam means to take across; take one in a boat and reach him to the other side. *Praṇava*, and Rama Nama are called *Thāraka Manthrās*. *Thyāgarājā* has sung with great yearning calling Rama as '*Thāraka* Nama'. The *Thāraka* Mantra is one that retrieves us, who are drowning in the ocean of the *Samsāra*, puts us in a boat and takes us across to the other side which is the *Paramapādha*.

In this *slōkā*, he prayed for many things. Remove Avinaya. Control my mind. Stop my *Indhriyās* from chasing the mirage of sensual pleasures. Make my love spread across to all living beings. The final destination for all this is escaping from the birth-death cycle called *Samsāra* and attaining a state of eternally happy liberation - *Mōkshasthāna*.

That we are caught in this *Samsāra* and are suffering is clear. We must get out of it. The only one to help us is *Bhagawān*. We have to pray to him 'God! Please take me from this from *Samsāra Sāgara* and deliver me to the other shore'.

Thāraya Samsāra Sāgaratha:

If He saved us from this *Samsāra Sāgara*, then we will not have our current sufferings and sorrows. We can leave it at that. I am not going to discuss here the differences between Adhvaitha Mukthi, Dhvaitha Mukthi, *Visishtādhvaitha* Mukthi etc. No matter which *Siddhānthā* we belong to, let us pray to *Bhagawān* in the manner that *Bhagavadhpādhā* prescribes in this *slōkā. Bhagawān* who is the *phaladhāthā*, the one who answers our prayers, will save us from this *Samsāra Sāgara* in the manner he chooses.

Like he said

'Thāraya Samsāra Sāgaratha:'

He has made an even more heart-rending appeal in Bhaja *Gōvindām*

Iha Samsārē Bahu Dhusthare Krupaya Pārē Pāhi Murārē

Thāram - Crossing. *Dhusthāram* - something that cannot be crossed. Bahu *Dhusthāram* - this *Samsāra* is impossible to cross. That is, whatever efforts we make, we cannot cross it. However, when we have Krupa from the *Bhagawān*, what can this *Samsāra* do? What is it that cannot be achieved with his Krupa, compassion, blessing? '*Murārī*! You are so kind , take me across to the other shore' He prays thus. Param means shore. Reach me to the other shore of *Samsāra*, is what it means here.

Our *Āchāryā* is like *Mēru* (a tall mountain) when it comes to Buddhi (intellect), *Jnānā* (wisdom) and *Vāgsakthi* (proficiency with language/speach etc). Yet he prays with great respect and humility: 'Nothing happens because of us. It is only *Īswara Krupā* and Dhaya that make things happen.' Expressions that he uses like '*Krupayā*', '*Dhayayā*' with great vinaya (humility) appear in *Soundarya Lahari* too. 'Shower me too with your '*katāksha* dhara'(sidelong glance)with compassion, whether I deserve it or not.' He says here *'Krupayā Mam Api Śivē'*. Again, he says 'Show me your kindness; place your feet on my head too' - '*Śirasi Dhayayā Dēhi Charañow*' .

Even if the word *Krupaya* does not appear in *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā*, the *Āchāryā* has composed this *sthōthrā* keeping in mind *Bhagawān*'s compassion and his other benevolent qualities and His auspicious form. It is from him that we are praying for *Bhūtha* Dhaya. Therefore, He must be a *Dhayāl̲u*, a *Krupal̲u*. Is it not?

A Sweet, Simple Slōkā

In the next *slōkā*, our *Bhagavadhpādhā* describes the feet of the *Bhagawān*. The next Padham in *Shatpadhī* is 'Bhagavadh Padham'!

Dhivya Dhunī Makarandhē
Parimal̲a Pari bhōga Satchidānandhē
S̄rīpathi Padhāravindhē
Bhava Bhaya Khēthachhidhē vandhē

This elegant *slōkā* is replete with such beautiful combination words and phrases that one feels like repeating it again and again. In a *slōkā* that describes the feet of the *Bhagawān*, even the words are as soft as the petals of flowers. '*Makarandhē*', '*Ānandhē*', '*Aravindhē*', every Padham ends in a rhyme. That itself gives us joy.

When the opening words in a stanza rhyme in every line it is called '*Āramba Prāsam*'. Normally in Sanskrit only the last words of the line rhyme (and not the words in the beginning). When the last words in the line rhyme, it is called '*Andhya Prāsam*'. Here is an example of a *slōkā*, that we recite at the *Pūjā* in our Mutt.

Samaravijaya Kōtī Sādakānanda thātī
MruduGun̄a gan̄apētī mukhya kādambha vātī
Muninutha paripātī Mōhithājānda kōtī
Paramas̄iva vadhūtī pādumām kāmakōtī

Here the rhyme stands out clearly in every line in *Andhya Prāsam*. This is by *Mūkhar* and appears in his *'Panchas̄ati Slōkā'*.

In *slōkās* that are replete with pholosophical meaning, full of experiential knowledge, and lyrical beauty, such phrases heighten the quality and elegance. In *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā* too there is a lot of such word-play.

When words with short aksharas and soft sounds are repeated it is always so nice to recite them. *'Avinayam Apanaya: Dhamaya Mana: Samaya'*. In this the aksharas na,ya, and ma are repeated again and again; it is so nice to recite. There are similar sounding words that are repeated. '*Visathāraya - Thāraya*'. This is called 'Yamagam or Madakku'.

Not only are they nice to recite. Usage of such phrases and contructions make a deep impression on the mind and are easy to remember. Therefore, it is easy to learn these *slōkās* by heart.

In the second *slōkā* the *Āchāryā* has composed the lines poetically using *Andhya Prāsam - Makarandhē, Ānandhē, Aravindhē, Vandhē* - and made it easy for us to easily learn by heart. That is his anugraha.

Śrīdēvi and the Lotus

Our *Bhagavadhpādhā* compares Lord *Vishṇu*'s feet to a lotus

Śrīpathi Pādhāravindhē

'*Pādha Aravindham*' means the sacred lotus feet. Sri means *Mahālakshmi*. *Śrīpathi* is Lakshmi *Nārayanan*. That *Śrīpathi* has lotus feet is indeed very appropriate because Lakshmi and Lotus are connected in many ways.

Padmapriyē Padmini Padma Hasthē
Padmālayē Padma Dhaḷāyadākshi

This is how we describe her and pray to her. She likes the lotus flower a lot. Therefore, Padmapriye! Padmini is the lotus stem. *Mahālakshmi* is like this thin stem due to her auspicious youth. It is the practice to refer to women with superior qualities as *'Padmini Jāthi'*. Padmini can also he understood as one who has 'padmas' (lotuses).

There are five places where Lakshmi always resides. The centre of the lotus flower, the head of an elephant, the near part of the cow, at the back of the bilva leaf, the parting of the hair Sumangal*i*'s head - these are the five. Even though there are five such places, what most people know is that she is sitting in the lotus. Paintings depict her that way. People sculpt idols that way. That is why it is said '*Padmālayē*'.

She has two lotuses in two out of her four hands. Therefore, '*Padmahasthē*'. Her eyes are like the petals of the lotus in bloom. Therefore, '*Padmadhaḻāyadākshi*'. Her face too is like a lotus. Although this has not been mentioned in this *slōkā*, in the Lakshmi *Ashtōthara* there is a name *'Padma Mukhi'*.

There are several names in *Ashtōthara* connected to Padma (lotus). She wears a garland made of lotuses (padma mālādharā). From her divine body emanates the smell of the lotus 'Padma Gandhini'. Just as 'Padmapriya' she has a lot of affection for the lotus, if we see who has a lot of love for her it is He who has has a lotus in His navel, it is 'Padmanābha Priyā' says the *Ashtōthara*. ().

'Padmāvathi', 'Kamalā', 'Ambujā', 'Pankajā' - all of these are names for Lakshmi connected with lotus.

In line with this her Pathi (husband), *Srīpathi*'s feet are like lotus.

Srīpathi Pādhāravindhē

Lakshmi, who has the Lotus for Her feet is pressing, is holding on to *Bhagawān*'s lotus feet on *'Śēshaparyanga'* (Ādhiśēshā who is the bed) in Kshīrābdhi (ocean of milk). Our *Āchāryā* refers to her too without direct mention and helps us have the *dharśan* of the divine couple.

Sacred Feet From which Ganga Flows

If it is a lotus, honey must flow out of it.

Which is the honey that flows out of the *Bhagawān*'s sacred feet?

Divyamadhunī Makarandhē

'Makarandham' is honey. *'Dhunī'* is a river.

'Divya *Dhunī*' is the river of *Dēvalōka*. It is Ganga that flows in *Ākāsā*, *Bhūmi* & *Pāthāḻā* with three different names (Ganga is *Mandākini* in *ākāsā*, *Bhāgīrathi* on the earth, Bhōgavathi in the *Pāthāḻa Lōka*). When *Mahābali* performed his *yāgā*, *Bhagawān* appeared as a dwarf Brahmachari, is it not? He then took the '*Thrivikrama Avathāra*'. With just one foot, he measured all of *Dēvalōka*. When the big step reached *Dēvalōka Brahmam* came running and performed *abhishēkhā* for that foot. The water which was used for the *abhishēkhā*, became *Mandākini*, the '*Ākāsā* Ganga'. That is the Divya *Dhunī*.

When seeing the big foot, which was like a lotus the water that flowed from as Ganges did not look like the water flowing because of *Brahmā's abhishēkam* but was like honey flowing from the huge lotus - like foot - the Divya *Dhunī*.

Divya *Dhunī Makarandē*

A pleasant smell emanates from *Bhagawān*'s lotus fut. We smell good only with 'scent'. *Bhagawān* by nature has a body from which emanates divine smell. 'Sugandhim', '*Gandha Dhwārām*' etc are words used in the *Vēdhās* themselves while referring to Gods.

Feet That Rid us of Samsāra and Grant Eternal Bliss

Parimaḻa Paribhōga Sacchidānandhē, says Āchāryā

Parimaḻam is Sugandham. Ranganāthā is described in *Parimaḻaranganāthā*.

'*Paribhōgam*' - something we enjoy, smelling again and again. However much we taste it, we don't tire of it. Is it like an ordinary feast or a moonlit dinner? *Thaithirīya* Upanishad mentions different types of *ānanda* and finally ends up with *Brahmānanda*. *Bhagawān*'s feet give such *ānanda*.

Brahmam is also referred to as Sat-chit-*ānanda*. That is the truth which is eternal. Sat - That is the knowledge that knows and what is known. Chit - At that stage there is nothing other than oneself and that is the eternal ānanda. *Śrīpathi*'s *Pādhāravinda* pours this *scahidānanda*, with the divine fragrance.

Dhivyadhunī Makarandhē
Parimaḷa Paribhōgha Sachidānandhē
Śrīpathi Pādhāravindhē

If this has to deliver Sachhidanandha, it must first destroy the '*Samsāra* bhaya' (fear).

Bhava Bhaya Ketha-chhidhē Vandhē

In the first *slōkā* he had prayed

Thāraya Samsāra Sāgaratha:

The *Samsāra* that was referred to there is the 'Bhava' that appears in 'Bhava Bhaya' here.

Samsāram is often referred to as Bhavam. There are terms like 'Bhava-Vina*i*','Bhava-sagara' etc in songs.

Bhavam means getting manifested. *Saravaṅabhava* manifested in *Śaravaṅa*. Udbhavam is a word from Bhavam. *Samsāram* means something that keeps flowing without remaining steady. That is 'Bhava'. It is a created object. It is clear from this that it not *anādhi* (timeless) or Swayambhu(self manifested)and that it is born from something. Because it has a beginning and a source, it must have a demise and an end. The *Paramāthma* thathva from which it was created is the eternal object without a beginning or an end.

Paramēswarā too has a name Bhavan. Bhavan, Sarvan, Rudran, *Pasupathi*, Ugran, *Mahādēvan*, *Bhīman*, *Īsānan* are eight special names of *Paramēswarā*. *Bhavāni* is Bhavan's wife. Sarvan's wife is *Sarvāṇi*. Rudra pathni is *Rudrāṇi*. Thus *Īsā-Īsāni*. Because he creates everything He is Bhavan. Because He is also a destroyer He is 'Sarvan'. The creator is also the destroyer. *Mūkhar* says jokingly to *Ambāḻ* in *Mukha Pancha Śathi* 'Mother your foot is giving pleasure to Bhavan (*Śiva*) and also destroying Bhava (*Samsāra*)' (*Pādāravindā Śathakam*, *Slōkā* 88).

Mūkhar mentioned *Ambāḻ's* foot. *Āchāryā* while describing *Mahā Vishṇu*'s fut (*Mahā Vishṇu* is the male form of *Ambāḻ*), says that '*Bhagawān*'s feet cut and throw away the sorrow called fear of *Samsāra*'.

Bhavabhaya *Khēthachchīdhē Vandhē*

Samsāra creates not just fear but also pain, sorrow, exhaustion. These are referred to as '*Khētha*'. *Āchāryā* says 'I prostrate before the feet that destroy fear and sorrow from *Samsāra*'.

Bhavabhaya Khēthachchīddhē

Adhvaitha āchāryā Speaks Bhakthi and Dhvaitham

In the next *slōkā* - that is the third *slōkā* of '*Shatpadhī Sthōthrā*' the *Āchāryā* discusses a very important philosophical concept.

> *Sathyapi Bhedhāpagamē Nātha!*
> *Thavāham na māmākīnasthvam*
> *Sāmudrō hi tharanga:*
> *Kvachana Samudrō na Thāranga:*

The words '*Bhēdha*', '*Apagamē*' when combined become '*Bhēdhāpagamē*'. 'Apagamam' means 'going off or going away' or 'being removed'. Gamam, or Gamanam is coming or joining. The opposite of this is 'Apagamam'. '*Bhēdhāpagamē*' means 'in a state when *Bhēdha* (differentiation) has been removed or has gone.

What *Bhēdha* are we talking about? There is *Paramāthmā*. There is *Jīvāthmā* different from it. This *Samsāra* drama is going on only because we think *Paramāthmā* and *Jīvāthmā* are different from each other. Adhvaitha says that the two are not at different but the same. This is the *Siddhānthā*, that the *Āchāryā* established. It is even called *'Jīva-Brahma Abhēdha yōgam'*.

He refers to the state where this difference has vanished as '*Bhēdhāpagamē*'. That is the true state when there is *Mōksha*, never changing *Ānanda* (bliss). This is also the highest truth. Yet, Sathyapi.

'Api' - even though, although. If we use such a clause, it means that we are going to see another view different from or opposed to what is already stated. He starts with 'Oh God! Even if the *bhēdha* that you and I are different vanishes...'

Our *Bhagavadhpādhā* is admired as 'Adhvaitha *Sthāpana āchāryā*'. He will not speak anything different from the *Abhēdha* Adhvaitha. Why then has he started with 'Ap*i*' here?

Here he is speaking as a bhaktha. He spoke about Adhvaitha as a *Jnāni* in a manner that is appropriate for those who are capable of following *Jnāna Marga*. That is how he wrote in his *Bhāshyās* and other *Jnānā Granthās*. He said it repeatedly and conclusinely 'There are no two things called *Jīvāthmā* and *Paramāthmā*. *Brahmam* is the only truth. *Jīvā* is also that *Brahmam*. This whole world is just a *Māyā*.'

Because he talks like this, it looks as if there is one who speaks, and there is another who listens and that there is a difference between them. If everything is *Brahmam* and the world is a *Māyā*, then who is to teach whom?

Śankara Bhgavadpādhā knows everything - there is nothing he does not know. When there is no work, when everything has subsided by itself, then the Adhvaithic state is attained and there is no difference between *Jīvā* and *Brahmam*. Then *'Bhēdha Agama'* results. It is the *Brahmam* however, that has projected itself as so many *Jīvā* Creatures, and the world and has created this '*kārya* prapancha' through *Māyā śakthi. Kārya* Prapancha is not the ultimate truth. The actionless-*Brahmam* is the support for it. Merging with that *Brahmam* is the state of eternal truth. All this thinking is fine. Even if it is not the eternal truth, even if temporarily we are thinking that the world real, it seems very real indeed. Even if a *Jnāni* is completely submerged in the Parama Sathya, and is *Brahmam* in 'nirvikalpa *Samādhi'*, that very *Brahmam* will come as *Īśwarā* which form it has taken for conducting the affairs of the world and tell the Jnāni. 'Even if everything seems for you one in essence, take note of the differences in the practical situation and do something good for the world by giving the right *Upadēśā*.' Thus it pushes even the *Jnāni* into self-less *karmā* in the service of others. It is in such state that the *Āchāryā* who was Adhvaita personified appeared as if he had accepted the practical state in which there is some one other than him and debated, spoke wrote and spread the message throughout the country. In that state, he engaged in bhakthi to *Īśwarā* who is the best of everything. He who was one with the *Brahmam*, who was actionless, demonstrated that he was a minute part of *Īśwarā* the Maha*śakthi*, when it came to action. In the actioneless state, the one who makes the *Jīvā* himself remains as the whole śakthi and reveals it little by little through *Jīvās* in the world of action. This is *Āchāryā*'s view.

It is from this angle that he has composed the third *slōkā* in *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā*.

In the exalted state of experience where the difference between *Jīvan-Brahmam* is gone,there is only one 'sath'. Even then, as long as we are in the world, and till the experience of '*Jnānā*' is attained. there is the all powerful *Īswarā* who rules the world and there are those *Jīvās* with insignificant power. In such a state if the Jīvā with a little power equates himself with *Īswarā* and thinks '*Īswarā* and I are one' and practises *Abhēdha*, that is wrong.

If it is asked, "Is Adhvaitha wrong them?' It is not so.

If we think that there is confusion, the *Āchāryā* makes it clear beautifully. Are the sea and the waves one or are they different? If we see the top it is different. If we go inside, it is the same. There are no waves inside. Likewise if we turn inward there are no *Jīvāthmās*, the waves. There is only one bottom of *Paramāthma Sāgara* - as Adhvaitha. The very same sea is seen with so many waves on top. In the same sea, many waves are created because of the wind. Similarly, under the influence of *Māyā* it appear there are several *Jīvāthmās* in one *Paramāthmā*.

In such a state, if every wave says 'I am the sea', is it not wrong? Is it not correct for them to say, 'all of us waves are from the same sea?'

Eventhough everything is one in *Adhvaithānubhūthi* - *Sathyapi bēdhāpagamē*- in '*Vyavahārā*' (practical state) 'we the *Jīvās*, fully and wholly belong to you. Just as there can he no waves without the sea.

Nātha Thavāham na māmakīnas-thvam

Nātha - Oh Lord, who rules over us

Thavāham - Thava, Aham. Aham - me, I. Thava- Yours. I am yours.

Na *māmakīnas*: thvam means Thvam - you, *māmakīnas*: Mine, - Na- Not. You are not mine.

Oh Lord! I am yours. You are the owner. You do not belong to me, as mine. The sea might be peaceful without the waves.

Inside it is so. Similarly, you may remain without the *Jīvās* and the prapancha. But there can be no waves without the sea. Like wise, I am not there without you ever. Just because I experience the oneness without any difference between you & I, in the practical state, when there are two of us seen, if I think that you are mine, and you are dependent on me, do you know how absurd it is? It is like saying the sea belongs to waves; the waves don't belong to the sea.

Sāmudrō hi tharanga: kvachana samudrō na thāranga:

Tharangam is a wave. (We say Jalatharangam). The wave belongs to the sea. The Sea does not belong to the waves. Never. Kvachana. Never. Even by mistake it should not be thought of that the *Paramāthmā* is dependent on the *Jīvāthmā*. Therefore, to emphasise this he uses the word 'kvachana' - never. In his great care to see that Advaitha should not be wrongly used to confuse people in the practical world, he emphasises this. Thāyumānavar sang 'Everything belongs to you'.

When it comes to the retimate experience, although *Āchāryā* has established the Siddantha that *Jīvā* and *Brahmam* are same, as against the *Śaiva* and *Vaishṇava Siddnāthā* taking into account the practical state while composing this *slōkā*, he advises that, one should not even by mistake think that he is *Īśwarā*, but is only a miniscule part of him. Therefore, one should remain respectful and humble. He prays to God in the attitude of utmost humility and does not lag behind *Śaiva- Vaishṇava* devotees in this attitude. He remains the embodiment of Vinaya which he preached at the beginning of the *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā* and prays to Him.

It is clear here how the *Āchāryā* was not at all dogmatic about his philosophy. His Siddantha and goal was Adhvaitha. But when not being in the state of his goal, while in the Dhvaitha stage of *Īśwarā-Jīvā*, he himself tells the jīvās. 'Do not bring in Adhvaitha here!' He asks that Adhvaitha be kept away more forcefully than Dvaithis.

If there is bliss in being the *Paramāthmā* itself, there is also bliss in engaging in Bhakthi to him. While practicing bhakthi only if we understand 'He is the Lord; we are his possessions; we have to remain ever so humble towards him', can we get that bliss. That is why our *Adhvaithāchāryā* says in great humility, 'If you are a big ocean I am just a little wave in that. I do not exist without you. I am your possession'. In praying like this he does not lag even a bit behind Rāmanujā and Madhva.

Amazing Anthādhi

Every *slōkā* in the *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā* is full of a different kind of beauty. In the fourth *slōkā*, the way in which the *Āchāryā* has 'braided' the words is unparalleled.

Normally we admire an '*Anthādhi*' which is a form of poetry. Kambar has composed 'Saraswathi *Anthādhi*', 'Satagōpar *Anthādhi*' etc. The verses in 'Thiruvāimozh*i*' (*Nammāzhwār's* Prabhanda) are full of *Anthādhi*s. In the *'Nālāyira Dhivya Prabandham'* the first three Āzhwārs resorted to singing *Anthādhis* immediately after 'Bhagavad *dharśana*'. These days 'Abhirami *Anthādhi*' is becoming famous.

'Antha' and '*Ādhi*', come together to become '*Anthādhi*'. Antham means the end. *Ādhi* means beginning. There is a practice to refer to *Paramāthmā* who has no beginning as 'Ādhyantha Rahithan'. *Manickkavāchagar* begins his '*Thiruvembāvai*' with this Ādhi and Antha.

Why did a poetry style get a name of '*Anthādhi*'? It is because the last word of the first stanza comes as the first word of the next stanza.

For example, *Poigai Āzhwār* while singing on *Perumāḷ* (*Mahā Vishṇu*), he starts with a *sthōthrā* to the *Dakshiṇāmūrthi* form.

He ends the first stanza with Aran *(Śiva)* as the 'antha' word. In the next stanza (referring the Hari-Hara *abhēdha*) he starts with 'Aran' as the *Ādhi* word.

There is a great advantage in composing *slōkās* like this, threading them together like a garland. It makes it easier for us to remember each *slōkā* one after the other.

It is possible to remember 'This stanza is ending with Aran; so the next one must begin with Aran.'

It requires great scholarship and proficiency to compose a stanza or a *slōkā* whose last word becomes the first word of the next one in '*Anthādhi*' form. Our *Āchāryā* has effortlessly done something more complex in the fourth *slōkā* of *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā*. Instead of making the Antha and *Ādhi* connection between one *slōkā* and another, he has composed something more difficult. In every *slōkā*, he has created the 'Antha' and '*Ādhi*' relationship between one word and the next word. He has created the Padhams here in this manner. Let me tell you what that *slōkā* is:

Udhruthanakha - Nakhabhitha nuja -
Thanujakulāmithra - Mithra Śaśidhrushtē -
Dhrushtē Bhavathi

So far, it has followed the *Anthādhi* pattern from word to word. It starts with Udhruthanakha. It ends with Nakha, which forms the beginning of the next one 'Nakhabhithanuja'. The last part of this 'Thanuja' becomes the beginning for the next one '*Thanujakulāmithra*'. This *slōkā* goes on in this amazing manner. The word at the end of the first phrase, becomes the beginning of next phrase. This is called 'Muktha *Pādha* Grastham'. Muktha - what was left. Grastha - what has been caught (held).

He starts the next line with '*Dhrushtē*', which was the ending of the first line. He starts it with *'Dhrushtē Bhavathi'*, and he plays around the aksharas of Bhavathi, and finally completees the line thus:

Dhrushtē Bhavathi Prabhavathi na
Bhavathi kim bhavathiraskāra:

If we take the full *slōkā*, it is like an uninterumpted flow of oil. The words follow one another beautifully.

Udhruthanakha - Nakhabhithanuja -
Thanujakulāmithra - Mithra Śaśidhrushtē
Dhrushtē Bhavathi Prabhavathi
na Bhavathi kim bhavathiraskāra:

In order that we may not miss the pronunciation beauty of the *slōkā*, I recited it without any break - without separating the pattern or the sandhi. If we separate things then 'Nakhabhithanuja' becomes 'Nakhabhith Anuja'; *Bhavathiraskāra*: becomes 'Bhava-*thiraskāra*:'.

Is it enough if one just beautifully threads the words together? It is said that these days there is a lot of play of words. It is not enough if the words are built one over the other; the meaning too must have beauty and depth. In this *slōkā*, we have both grace of the words and depth of meaning.

Slōkā that has Continuity of Ideas too

Udh-dhruth nakha

Nakham - means a mountain. Gam means to walk, move, vibrate. Because the mountain does not move or vibrate it is called 'Achalam', 'Agam', 'Nagam' etc. Just as we call *Ambāḷ* (the daughter of Parvatharaja) *Girijā*, we also calle Her '*Agajā*', '*Ngajā*' etc. There is a *slōkā* on *Piḻḻaiyār* (*Vināyakā*), which starts with

Agajānana Padmārkkam Gajānanam

He is Gaja Anana - that is the one with an elephant face. The opposite of '*Gajānanam*' is '*Agajānanam*'. If we see the meaning however, it says that this *Gajānana*, is the sun who lets the lotus face of *Pārvathī* blossom.

Agajā is *Pārvathī*. Anana is face. Padma is lotus. Arka is Surya

Agajānana Padmārkkam Gajānanam

Agam and Nagam both mean the same thing - a mountain. 'Udhruth-Nakha' means 'you who lifted a mountain'. 'You who held up the mountain' - *Mīrābhai's* constant refrain Giridhara Gopala meant this state only.

Bhagawān lifted the mountain on two occasions. The first one was when the *Dēvās* were churning the '*Kshīra* Sagara' to get 'Amrutha' with Manthara Mountain as the 'churn-stick' and the snake Vāsuki as the rope, *Mahā Vishnū* took the form of a tortoise, and held the mountain firmly at the bottom of the sea. After that during *Krishnāvathārā*, there was a lot of suffering due to heavy rain because of Indra's anger, and *Krishnā* lifted the *Gōvardhanagiri* and held it as an umbrella to protect all of *Gōkula* from the rain. He is Giridhara Gopala. Our burden of *karmā* is like a mountain. Only *Bhagawān* is capable of bearing this load just as *Bālakrishnā* lifted '*Gōvardhana Giri*' on his little finger.

'Nakhabhithanuja'. Nakhabhith and Anuja combine to become Nakhabhithanuja. Nakhabith means some one who broke the mountains. In the ancient times, *Dēvēndra* cut off the wings of the mountains with his Vajrayudha. Anuja means this *Dēvēndrā's* sibling. But that is not adequate. Anujan is some one who is born after, a younger brother. Born before, born after - both are brothers. Born before is *Pūrvajan* and born after is Anujan

Bhagawān was born as *Dēvēndra's* younger brother.

Rāmānujan means Rāma Anujan. That is *Rāmā*'s younger brother Lakhmaña *Swāmi*. *Lakshmaña* was an *avathārā* of *Ādhi Ṡēsha*. *Rāmānujāchāryā*, who is considered by *Vaishñavās*, as an *avathārā* of *Ādhi Ṡēsha*, was called *Lakshmaña* in his *pūrvasrama* (before he took sanyās).

When was *Vishñu* born as *Dēvēndra*'s younger brother? It was during *Vāmanāvathara*. All the *Dēvās* including Indra were born to *Kāṡyapa* Maharishi and his wife Adhithi. When *Bhagawān* took the *avathārā* of *Vāmana* to tame *Mahābali*, he was born as a son to the same *Adhithi-Kāṡyapa* couple. Therefore, he has become Indra's younger brother. Hence, he also has a name called *Upēndran*.

In *Krishñāvathārā*, he lifted the *Gōvardhana Giri*; put down Indra's pride and subjugated him; he became Udhrutha Nakha. Earlier in *Vāmanavathārā*, he was a younger brother of the same Indra - Nakhabhithanuja! At that time, he tamed *Mahābali* and retrieved *Dēvalōka* for Indra. Bhagavan does not have love or hate for any individual. If some one is humble and is following the path of Dharma, he will be affectionate towards him; if the same person becomes arrogant and went on the path of adharma, he will punish him. His love and hate is based on what a person does according to Dharma - good or evil. The *Āchāryā* points out *Bhagawān*'s conflicting behaviour towards the same person, in the same *slōkā*, in consecutive phrases - 'Udhruthanakha, Nakhabhithanuja'.

'Thanuja-*Kulāmithra*': 'Thanuja' means *Asurās*. Thanujas are the sons of a woman called 'Thanu'. Thanu too is the wife of the same *Kāṡyapa*, who is the father of the *Dēvās*. He is the father of the *Dēvās* and *Asurās*. Only the mothers are different. *Dēvās* who are the sons of Adhithi are called '*Āthithyas*'. *Kāṡyapa* also had a wife called Thithi. Her sons are called 'Thaithyas'. They too are *Asurās*. Thanu's sons are also called Thanavas also (like Thanujas)

'Nakhabhithanuja' - in that the word Thanuja stems from the sandhi(combination) of two words. Only if we separate it, as Nakhabhith and Anuja we will get mearing. If we separate it as Nakhabhi & Thanuja it is wrong. In order to make way for Thanuja-*Kulāmithra*', which is appearing later, the *Āchāryā* included thanuja in Nakhabhithanuja in the sandhi, so that it fits the requirement of the *Anthādhi* pattern.

In many *slōkās* there are such interesting aspects. Even in '*Agajānana Padmārkkam*' there are *'Anēka Dhantham Bhakthānām, Eka Dhantham Upāsmahē'*. 'How peculiar? How is it right to call some one as *Ēka Dhanthar* as well as Anēka Dhantar - (one with one Dhantha and many Dhantha). *Anēka Dhantham* is actually two words *Anēkadham* and tham - combined into one *Anēkadhantham*. *Anēka*-dham-tham. *Bhakthānam Anēkadham* means, *Pi̱ḻlaiyār* (*Vināyakā*) grants his *Bhakthās* various kinds of good things. Tham *Upāsmahē* - I pray to him. He has only one Dhantham, horn. This *Ēka* Dhantham is the phrase. Because it adds a certain lyrical beauty, the line has been composed as *'Anēka Dantham Bhakthānam Ēka Dantham Upāsmahē'* where the word is repeated in an interesting way. If we had to follow the prose order, it should have been '*Bhakthānam Anēkatham Ēka* Dantham *Upāsmahē*'. (I pray to one with one horn, who grants several good things to his devotees). In any language there is poetic license to place words in different ways.

'Thanuja *Kulāmithra*' means the 'enemy (*amithra*) of *Asurās* - (who belong to) Thanuja Kula'.

When *Bhagawān* (*Vishnu*) was born as Indra's younger brother to the *Kaśyapa*-Adhithi couple, Thanujas(*Asurās*) became his brothers; born to his step mother Thanuja. However since *Bhagawān* only considers Dharma/adharma, and not relationships, he remained thanujas' amitra (enemy).

He was an affectionate younger brother to Indra(who is inconsistent -sometimes good/ sometimes evil)and got him back his kingdom from *Mahābali*. At the same time he punished him when he became a *Gōvardhana Giridhari*, held the mountain high and made Indra lose all his power and fall at his feet. Although they were brothers he remained as an amitra(enemy) towards the evil Thanujas.

It seems that on one hand this *slōkā* demonstrates how to connect the end of the last phrase(word), and beginning of the next phrase/word. Smilarly it also looks like it has developed an idea of how the *Bhagawān* supports and punishes, and presented that in a neat thread.

'Mithra Śaśi Dhrushtē'

We all know that *Mithra* means a friend. We use the term 'Bandhu Mithra'. The opposite of Mithra is *Amithra*. Here when it says *'Mithra Śaśi Dhrushtē'*, Mithra here refers to the Sun. Here the *Āchāryā* has employed the technique of using the same word with different meanings.

Throughout the *Vēdhās*, 'Surya' has been referred to as 'Mithra'. In those days praying to Sun in *Vēdhic* ways was spread throughout the world. Even in foreign countries, the word '*Mithra*' has been in use. Even a treaty signed by two kings in Egypt in 1300 BC (treaty of Ramesas II with Hittites) it seems was signed with *Mithra* and *Varuṇa* as witnesses.

'*Mithra-Śaśi-drushtē*' Here Mithra is Surya. *Śaśi* is the Moon. Inside the sparkling white moon, there is something visible like a shadow. If we look at it keenly, it looks like a rabbit. In Sanskrit a rabbit is called '*Śaśam*'. Because a moon has a rabbit inside it, it is called '*Śaśankan*'. It is also called *Śaśi*.

The *Āchāryā* refers to the one who has '*Mithra-Śaśi*'- Surya & Chandra as His eyes as '*Mithra-Śaśi-Dhrushtē*'. In the *Visvarūpa* of *Bhagawān*, in *Virāta Swarūpa*, Surya is his right eye and Chandra is his left eye.

Now it seems to remind us about several things. Indra's younger brother, *amithra* (enemy) of Thanujas - reminds us of *Vāmanavathārā*. Thereafter *Vāmana* Brahmachari takes the *Viśvarūpa* as Thrivikrama and shows Surya and Chandra as His eyes.

In the pūrva bhāga (begning) of *Vishnu Sahasranāma*, in the *slōkā* that starts with 'Bhu: Pādhow' there is mention of 'Chandra Sūryow cha nēthrē'. *Mithra Śaśi Dhrushtē* is the same.

Getting Rid of Samsāra By Dharśana

Dhrushtē Bhavathi Prabhavathi Na - Bhavathi kim *Bhavathiraskāra*:

He has used the word 'Bhavathi' four times with different meanings, again in this *slōkā*. It is almost like surpassing the literary abilities of Mahakavis, that the *Āchāryā* has demonstrated his command of words.

In *'Dhrushtē Bhavathi'*, Bhavathi means 'in you'. When we want to show respect to some one we must say *'Bhavān'*. The feminine gender for this is Bhavathi. In '*Bhavathi Bhikshām Dēhi*', Bhavathi is addressing the housewife respectfully, as 'Lady'. When Bhavathi is used as a verb, it means 'becomes'. Here in '*Dhrushtē* Bhavath*i*' that is the meaning.

'Dhrushtē Bhavathi' means 'if our sight rests in you'. That is 'if we get your *dharśana*'. What kind of person is He? He is the lord and master of the whole world. 'Prabhavathi Bhavathi *Dhrushtē*' means 'If our sight rests on you, the lord of the world'. What happens when you get that '*Dharśan*?'

Na Bhavathi kim Bhava Thiraskāra:

'*Bhavathiraskāra*:' should be split as 'Bhava *thiraskāra*:'. *Thiraskāram* is to conceal. In 'Mantrika', the art of concealment is called '*Thiraskariṇī*'. Bhavam means *Samsāram*. Earlier in *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā*, we have seen *'Bhava Bhaya Kēthachiddhe'*, where the word Bhava appears. Bhava *Thiraskāram* means, concealing the *Samsāra* Bandha, making the life of *Samsāra* Vanish', or removing *Samsāra*. In 'Na Bhavathi kim', Bhavathi is a verb. Here it means 'becomes/happens'. Na Bhavathi Kim, means 'does it not become/happen?' What does not become/happen? Disappearance of *Samsāra*. 'Once your *dharśan* is available can it happen that *Samsāra* does not disappear?' He asks this in the form of a question. When put in a question form there is greater emphasis.

Gītā (2.59) says that once you have the *Dharśana* of the *Paramāthmā*, all the *Vāsanās* and tastes remaining in your mind will vanish. With that, the *Samsāra* too must vanish. Similar to what the *Bhagawān* has said 'Param *Dhrushtwā*' in the *Gītā*, the Saha-*Āchāryā* has said '*Dhrushtē* Bhavath*i*' here. Let the Bhagawath-*Dharśanam* lead to Adhvaitha *Sākshāthkāram* or let it be Dhvaitha *Dharśana*. Whichever way it is, we are not caught in the 'Birth-Death' cycle in the world thereafter. The *Āchāryā* asks 'Can it be that such a thing does not happen? Na Bhavathi Kim Bhava *Thiraskāra*:?'

Īśwarā Sabdha for Sri Hari

Next one is the fifth *slōkā* in *Shatpadhī*.

MathsyādhibhirAvathārai:
Avathāravathāvathā Sadhā Vasudhām
Paramēśwara Paripālyō
Bhavatha Bhavathāpa Pīthōham

Here again he has used Bhavatha twice differently. In the first instance, we must take it as a separate word. It means 'by you.' What follows is 'Bhava Thapa *Pīthōham*'. (Pitha: Aham). It means 'I who am terrified because of the *Samsāra thāpa*'

Paramēswara Paripālyō
Bhavatha Bhavathāpa Pīthōham

'I (who) am afraid because of the *Samsāra thāpa*, have to be protected by you who is the *Paramēswarā*.' - This is what this means.

In general, we have kept the sabdhas *Īswarā, Paramēswarā*, to denote Lord *Siva*. *Āchāryā* on the other hand is an Adhvaithi in everything. He has only non-dualistic, feelings. *Śiva- Vishṅu Abhēdha* is one such thing. In his grantha called *Prasnōthara Rathna Mālikā*, the *Āchāryā* keeps preaching through questions and answers. He asks a question 'Who is *Bhagawān*?' (Kaccha *Bhagawān*?) and provides this answer 'It is the one and only *Āthmā* who is *Śankara* and *Nārāyaṅā*' *(Mahēsa: Śankara Nārāyaṅāthmāka Ēka:)* He does not show even a bit of difference between Hari-Hara. *Nārāyaṅā* too is *Mahēswara, Paramēswarā* for him, as much as as *Sankara* is. Therefore he addresses *Mahā Vishṅu* as *Paramēswarā* and prays 'I have to be protected by you' (*Paripālya* Aham)

This is the *slōkā*'s second line. In the first line he keeps repeating some thing called '*Vathā Vathā*'; what does that mean?

Avathārās

MathsyādhibhirAvathārai:

If we split this, it is '*Mathsyādhibhi: Avathārai*:' That means 'By *Avathārās* such as Mathsya and others'. He refers to the *Daśāvathāra* (ten incarnations) of *Bhagawān*, taken by him for *Lōka rakshaṅam* (the protection and welfare of the world).

What is meant by *Lōka rakshaṅam?* Is it like administering a huge government, huge court, huge army, huge police department, for all the countries in the world? No. If the *Vedhās* are protected and if everybody is able to observe their 'Swadharma' meant for them, that is *Lōka rakshaṅa. Vēdha Rakshaṅam* is *Lōka rakshaṅam*. The sounds of the *Vēdha Manthrās* must be constantly reverberating in the atmosphere. All the *dēvathās* must be pleased because of the various *Vēdhic Yajnās*. Then it will be that the entire world has been protected. Whenever *Vēdha* Dharma declines and there is deterioration in the world, then *Mahā Vishṅu*, the '*Pālana Karthā*' appears in an incarnation, and revives the *Vēdhās*. Then the world would attain '*Kshēma*'.

Asurās like Sōmukhasūra and *Hayagrīva*, hid all the *Vēdhās* in 'deep waters'. Then *Bhagawān* took the incarnation of a Mathsya (fish) and retrieved the *Vēdhās*. That is *Mathsyāvathāra*. This is referred to as '*Pra̱laya Payōthi Jalē*' in *Jayadēvā's Ashtāpadhi*.

In ten such *Avathārās* the *Bhagawān* leaves His high abode and comes down to the earth. He comes down from the Ultimate place - the Vaikuntha (also called *Paramapādha*), to our world. '*Avathāra*' means to come down. 'Thara' is a peak. In music, we refer to the higher octaves as '*Thārasthāyi*'. 'Ava-thara' means the reverse order - to come down from the peak. *Bhagawān* comes down like this because of his great compassion. He comes down from the peak of peaks, so that he can reach down to us, lift us by our hands and take us up.

The expression '*Avathāravathā*' in the *slōkā* means 'because (he is) the one who came down'

'Mathsyabhi: *Avathārai'* by the *Avathārās* such as Mathsya and others

Avathāravathā - the one who came down.

Avathāravathā+Vatha. There are three 'Vathas' appearing consecutively. In the latter Avatha, 'Ava' means to protect. In many of the Kirthanas (compositions) we see a term 'Māmava'. It is Mam+Ava meaning - Mam - me; Ava - Protect = Protect Me.

Here the expression *'Avathāra Sadhā Vasudhām'* refers to the Bhagavan protecting (ava) the world (*Vasudhām*) for ever (*Sadhā*), through his *Avathārās.*

Vasu refers to several kinds of riches. Because the earth gives all the natural resources(riches) it is called *Vasudhā.* It is also called Vasundhara. The *Āchāryā* refers here to the Lord appearing in His incarnation to protect and rejuvenate the earth, whenever it dries up and becomes arid, because of the sins committed by the people.

Bhūmādēvi, who bears (the burden of) all the sins committed by the people, goes to the Lord and pleads with Him, when she cannot bear it beyond a certain stage. He immediately appears in an *Avathāra* (incarnation). *Bhāgavatha* mentions that *Bhagawān* took the *Avathāra* of *Krishṅā* and herded cows.

The meaning of the *slōkā* is '*Paramēswarā*! You keep protecting the world through Mathsya and other incarnations. I am afflicted by the fears of *Samsāra.* I too, am required to be protected by you.'

He uses the same expression repeatedly '*Avathāravathā Bhavathā Bhavathāpa*'. By the very expression itself, he has indicated how the Lord in his great compassion, has taken *Avathārās* repeatedly to protect the world.

The *Śaivās* say with pride 'It is only *Vishṅu* who keeps appearing again and again on this earth. Ony He has 'Garbha-vasa'. Our *Īswarā* does not have it.' Whereas the *Vaisṅavās* proudly acclaim 'Only our *Perumāl* has the great compassion to take different *Avathārās* to elevate the people even by coming down. *Īswarā* does not have it.' In such a situation our *Āchāryā* has addressed *Mahā Vishńu (perumāḻ)* as *Paramēśwarā*, referred to the *Avathārās* and pleased both sides.

Kāḻidāsā says 'Hari is *Purushōthamā*; the most admired and respected amongst all *Purushās* (men); it is only Triyambhaka (the three-eyed) who has the title of *Mahēśwara* and no one else.'

Harir: Yadhaika: Prushoththama Smrutha:

Mahēśwaras-thryambaka Ēva Nāpara:

Even in a Sanskrit dictionary called Amaram, it is said '*Īśwara*: Sarva *Īśāna*:', thus giving the title of *Īśwarā* only to *Siva* who is the Sarvan and *Īśānan*.

Our *Āchāryā* who does not entertain even a little bit of difference between *Śiva-Vishńu*, calls *Mahā Vishńu* himself as '*Paramēśwarā*' and prays to Him 'Please protect me'!

Twelve Names: Nāmam Applied on the Forehead

The next *slōkā*:

Damōdhara Guńamandhira
Sundaravadhanāravindha Gōvinda
Bhavajaladhi Mathana Mandhara
Paramandharam Apanaya thvam mē

Our *Āchāryā* has composed this *slōkā* with sweet words that end with the sound 'ndha', and repeated them several times. He wanted this sound to appear in every line. Therefore, in the fourth line he has used the word 'Paramandharam' that is a conjunction of Paramam and Dharam. This is similar to *Anēkadham* Tham becoming *Anēkadhantham*.

In the first two lines, he calls out to the *Bhagawān*. He uses two names '*Dāmōdharā*' and '*Gōvindā*'. '*Guńamandhira*' and '*Sundaravadhanāravinda*' too are addressing the *Swāmi*.

Dāmōdharā and *Gōvindā* however are well-known popular names of the *Bhagawān*.

There are twelve names, which are important for *Mahā Vishṇu*. For *Paramēswarā* the eight namas, Bhavan, Sarvan, *Īsānan*, *Pasupathi*, Ugran, Rudran, *Bhīman*, and *Mahādēvan* are important. Similarly, these twelve names are important for *Vishṇu*. Even if we perform archana with the Sahasra Nāma (thousand names), *Thrisathi* (Three Hundred names), *Ashtōthara* Sadam (Hundred and Eight names), in the end we have to complete the archana with these *Ashta Nāma* or *Dwādasa Nāma* (twelve names) respectively for *Īswarā* and *Perumāḻ* (*Mahā Vishṇu*). It is said that if we are unable to perform the archana using *Ashtōthara* etc it is enough if we used the eight or twelve names. For *Piḻḻaiyār* there are sixteen such special names.

For *Mahā Vishṇu* the *Dwādasa* Namas are important. '*Nāmam*' is the name for what the *Vaishṇavās* wear on their forehead. What is the origin of this name ? *Vaishṇavās*, *Ṡaivās*, *Smārthās*, and Mādhvās must wear their *Nāmam*, *Vibhūthi* or Gopichandana not only on the forehead but also on the chest, abdomen, shoulder and wrist. People who are staunch believers do so even today. They wear the *Nāmam* in twelve places. The concept is this. We must think of the twelve names of *Mahā Vishṇu* that we are very fond of and wear the twelve *Nāmams*. For each of the twelve names we must have one *Nāmam* on the body. While wearing the *Thirumān* (*Nāmam*) we must think of the *Bhagawān* who is the world and who measured the world. These twelve *Thirumān* symbols were given the name '*Dwādasa Nāmam*' because they were worn as symbols of the twelve names of *Mahā Vishṇu*.

We repeat these twelve names during the *Āchamana* (in Sandhyavandana). We touch the face, eyes, nose, ears, shoulder, heart and head while repeating these names.

The twelve names are Kēšavā- Nārāyaṅā-Mādhavā-Gōvindā-Vishṅu-Madhusūdhana-Thrivikramā-Vāmana-Srīdhara-Hrishīkēšā-Padmanābha-Dāmōdharā.

Interestingly *Rāmā* and *Krishṅā* - two names that refer to the two most important *avathārā*s are not mentioned in these twelve names. *Kēšavā*, *Gōvindā*, *Dāmōdharā* are nevertheless *Krishṅā's* names. *Kēšavā* - because he killed a demon called '*Kēši*'. *Gōvindā* because he protected the Gō (Cows).

Dāmōdharā

Dāmōdharā means 'he who has an abdomen tied with a rope'. Damam means a rope. Udharam - abdomen. *Dāmōdharan* - he whose abdomen is tied with rope.

'You are stealing butter, are you? I will tie down with rope'. So saying *Yašōdhā* was trying to tie *Balakrishṅā* with rope. He played a trick on her such that no matter how much rope she used, she could not tie his small abdomen. Later when he saw her getting tired and exasperated, out of compassion, he tied himself up. It is then that the name *Dāmōdharā* came into usage. Th *Āzhwārs* have sung about this with great emotion. 'Oh Lord, you let the rough rope go around your soft skin of the abdomen, when *Yašōdhā* tied you down'

He is the *Parādhina* who is bound by the devotion of his *bhakthās*. Yet some one who thinks with arrogance that 'I can tie you down' he shows that 'I will not be bound by that. Only when I decide out of my compassion and kindness to do so, then only I will be bound'. This is *Dāmōdharā*. Later before the great *Mahābhārathā* war, he let Sahadēva tie him up, because of his love. affection, when Sahadēva challenged him saying 'I will bind you'. Whe he was *Dāmōdharā* he has demonstrated the importance of Bhakthi combined with humility, Which is the emphasis of the *Shatpadhī sthōthrā* from the beginning.

Āṅdal has said that has purified Dēvak*i*'s womb because he resided there during 'Garbhavasa'(pregnancy). *Āṅdal* has shown that the very same one who was bruised by the ropes tied around his abdomen, by his foster mother has purified the womb of the mother who gave birth to him. This is the meaning given from a Bhakthi perspective. A philosophical perspective is ' Dāma Udharan' means 'He who has the abdomen in which resides everything. That is he holds everything inside him'.

Meaning of the Sacred Names

It is said that '*Gōvindā*n' means 'Some one who tames the *Indhriyās* and rules over them'. In this context 'Go' refers to the *Indhriyās*. *Thirumūlar* refers to them as *Indhriya Paśu*. There is a similar philosophical explanation for '*Kēśavā*'. K+A+Isa+Va = *Kēśavā*. K means *Brahmā*. Even in the *Vēdhās* it has been mentioned thus. A is *Vishṅu*. The same *Vishṅu* who is refereed to in *Thiruvalluvar*'s first verse and is manifested in the world. The *Praṅava* OM is a combination of A, U, M. In that A is *Vishṅu*, U is *Īswarā* and M is *Brahmam* - thus the AUM refers to the *Paramāthmā* who keeps all three of them in his hold. An interpretation for *Kēśavā* is given thus.

Mādhavan is as sweet as honey. Good looking and sweet(pleasant) attitude. This too is a special name for *Krishṅā*. This is also a name for *Mahā Vishṅu*. *Mahā Vishṅu* destroyed two demons called Madhu-Kaidabar. He got the name *Mādhava* because he killed Madhu. There is yet another meaning. 'Mā' means Lakshmi. The 'Mā' that appears in *Kāmākshi* too means Lakshmi. Just as '*Śiva*-Pathn*i*' is *Śiva*; the wife of *Brahmam* who is referred to as *Kā*, is Saraswathi who is also called *'Kā'*. She who has *Kā* (Saraswathi) and Ma(lakshmi) as her two eyes, she is *Kāmākshi*! Even *Muthuswāmi Dīkshitar* points out to Saraswathi and Lakshmi being the two eyes of *Kāmākshi* in his composition, '*Nīrajakshi Kāmākshi*'. He addresses her as '*Śāradhā Ramā*

Nayanē'. Mā in Tamil too means Lakshmi. Dhavan in Tamil means husband. Lakshmi's Husband is Mā+Dhava = *Mādhava*. He is also called *Māramanan*.

Madhusūdhana, which is one of the twelve names, also refers to the killing of the demon, Madhu. Although it was *Mahā Vishn̄u* who killed Madhu, *Krishn̄ā* is called *Madhusūdhana*, because he is a '*Pūrn̄āvathāra*'.

Hrishīkēs̄a is another such name. Hrishikam refers to the *Indhriyās*. The Isa who tames and rules over the *Indhriyās* is *Hrishīkēs̄a*. In the *Gītā, Krishn̄ā* is referred to in several places as *Hrishīkēs̄a*.

Of the twelve names, the four names *Nārāyan̄ā*, *Vishn̄u*, *Srīdhara* and *Padmanābha* directly denote *Mahā Vishn̄u*. *Thrivikramā* and *Vāmana* refer the *Vāmana Avathāra*, when he appeared as a dwarf Brahmachari and later grew to enormous proportions to measure the world. The remaining six names *Kēs̄avā*, *Mādhava*, *Gōvindā*, *Madhusūdhana*, *Hrishīkēs̄a*, *Dāmōdharā* have most commonly been used as '*Krishn̄a Nāmas*' (names for *Krishn̄ā*). The specific names for Rama *Avathārā* and Nrusimha *Avathārā* are not part of the twelve names.

The *Vēdha Sūkthās* make a special mention only about *Mahā Vishn̄u* appearing as *Thrivikramā*. Thereafter in *Purān̄ās*, Bhajans, and *Sankīrthanās* it is the name of *Krishn̄ā* eulogised specially as Pūrn̄a*vathārā*. In the twelve names only these two *Avathārā* names appear.

Out of these twelve names, the *Āchāryā* has used the two names *Dāmōdharā* and *Gōvindā* in the sixth *slōkā* of Shatpathi *Slōkā*. He started the first *slōkā* by addressing *Vishn̄u* 'Avinaya Apanaya *Vishn̄ō*!'. He however completes this *slōkā* by using two names of *Krishn̄ā* who is a Pūrn̄a*vathāra*.

Nirguña and Guñanilaya
(Attributeless and the abode of Attributes)

Sri *Āchāryā* starts the sixth *slōkā* with '*Dāmōdharā Guñanmandhira*!'

'*Guñamandhira*!' means - 'He who is the abode of all *Guñās* (attributes)'. *Mandhira* is a place, an abode where people/things reside. We call places where God is present in the form of a Vigraha as a *Mandhira* (temple). In the North they refer to the temple as a *Mandhir*. '*Guñamandhiran*' is some one who is the abode of 'Anantha *Kalyāña Guña*' (infinite number of auspicious qualities).

'*Guña*' also means a rope. In *Dāmōdharā*, Dāma denoted a rope. Thus in this entire *slōkā* we can take it that the *Āchāryā* has inter-woven words and meanings. That is how *Guñamandhira* is used.

Guñamandhiran is one who is the abode of all auspicious *Guñās*.

People who have imperfect knowledge about 'Adhvaitha *Sāsthrās*' might ask 'Is it right for our *Āchāryā* to praise the lord as 'Anantha *Kalyāña Guña* Nilaya in his *slōkā*?'The reason is that according to Advaitha *Siddhānthā* that *Āchāryā* established as the ultimate, *Brahmam* or Supreme Godhead is *Nirguña* (attributeless). That is it has no attirbutes. That itself is *Jīvāthmā*. Only as long as the *Jīvāthmā* has a mind, there are *Guñās* , activities, name and form etc up to a point.

If one vanquishes the mind through constant '*Jnāna Vichāra*', the *Nirguña Ēka* Vasthu (The attributeless one) *Brahmam* becomes the *Jīvāthmā*. That is *Mōksha*. Our *Āchāryā* was firmly rooted in this philosophy.

Śankara had advocated *Nirguña Brahmam*. *Mādhva* had advocated *Saguña Brahmam*. This is adequate for our purpose for the time being.

The question is 'The *Āchāryā* who advocated the *Nirguña Brahmam*, can he also celebrate '*Guñamandhira*'?'

The answer is that, he can do so. What do we see in the *Āchāryā* (*Śankara*) *Bhāshyās*? *Mōksha* is what is seen as *Nirguña* in the ultimate stage. That is the Swa-*Swarūpa* stage when the *Jīvāthmā* and *Paramāthmā* become one. Yet he (the *Āchāryā*) also says that the *Paramāthmā* creates the *Jīva*-Jagath out of his *Māyā Śakthi* and is the one who rules them as *Īśwarā*. This *Īśwarā* is the *Saguña Brahmam*.

Rāmānujā and *Mādhva* advocated the joy arising out of worshipping this *Īśwarā* as some one who is different from us. You would have understood by now that our (*Śankara*) *Āchāryā* too has spoken a lot about such worship and the joy derived out of it, by just listening to the meaning of the '*Shatpadhī*' *Sthōthrā*.

He however goes further to say that the *upāsakā* must use this as the first step. As the second step he recommends that the *Upāsakā* (the worshipper) must become the the *Upāśyā* (the one who is worshipped). That is he becomes the *Nirguña* Adhvaitha.

That is fine. Does the *Jnāni* who has attained '*Adhvaithānubhava*', remain always in *Nirguña*? That does not seem so! Even the *mahājnānis* are active and blessing various things in the external world, is it not? Everyone from *Sukhabrahmam* to our *Āchāryā* to *Sadāśiva Brahmēndra* have been like this. Does that mean that the *Nirguña* experience they had in the *Samādhi* stage has then left them?

The answer for that is this: *Samādhi* is when when one is oblivious to us, this world. Even if we say that when a *Jnāni* is active in this world his *Samādhi* has been disturbed, in reality it is not so. Even if it appears to us that the *Jnāni* is active in this world, the *Jnāni* continues in this *Samādhi* state only. Even if it appears so to us, he is not conscious about it; nor does have this feeling that 'I am doing this'. His old mind as a separate entity is gone for ever. Thereafter it is *Īśwarā* who is doing things through him.

It is *Īśwarā* who makes him do many things for *lōka*sangraha (welfare of the world). In doing so He makes the *Jnāni* indulge in Bhakthi towards the *Saguńa Brahmam* (that is *Īśwarā* who controls this prapancha) and enjoys that too. This too is *Īśwarā's* sport.

For such a janani there are no *Saguńa-Nirguńa* differences. He derives joy and bliss in the *Saguńa Brahmam* experience itself, as if it is the *Nirguńa Brahmam* experience. That this dhvaitha too is a guise of Adhvaitha is well rooted in him. He might even think 'Why don't I enjoy the variety of the all auspicious *Saguńa* instead of the '*Nirguńa*' which is embodiment of peace all by itself?'

Adhvaithis who are Krishńa Bhakthās

It is in such a state that *Sadāśiva Brahmēndra* who was a staunch adhvaithi sang *'Brahamani Mānasa Sanchara Rē'* (Oh Mind! Keep engaged and moving about in the *Nirguńa Brahmam*). Immediately thereafter he starts describing *Krishńā* who has a peacock feather on his head, in an enthralled fashion.

Similarly our *Āchāryā* too has composed several *sthōthrās* on several deities who are the various forms of the *Saguńa Brahmam*. There he has described the deities from head to feet and elaborated on their attributes and līlās in a soul stirring manner.

Guńamandhira does not mean that he has forgotten *Nirguńa*. Nor is he contradicting it. On the contrary it occurs to me that because he is talking about *Guńamandhira*, he is advocating *Nirguńa*.

How is that?

We talk about the seven colours in the VIBGYOR. If we combine all these colours what happens? Does it not become colourless, a plain white?

Similarly because he(*Brahmam*) has all the attributes, he is also the attributeless *Nirguṅa* Vasthu.

Colourless sunlight separates into seven colours because of refraction. Similarly *Nirguṅa*(which is the abode of all *nāma-rūpa* etc) looks like so many *nāma-rūpa-jīvā-jagath* through the refraction of *Māyā*.

Now we can see a great word play when *Āchāryā* mentions *Guṅamandhira* immediately following *Dāmōdharā*. *Dāma-Udharan* means 'he who has an abdomen tied by ropes'. Now it seems like *Guṅamandhira* is *Nirguṅa* tied with various *guṅās* (attributes). In reality he cannot be constricted by *Guṅās* . Just as *Krishṅā* acted as if he was bound by the ropes tied by *Yaśōdhā* (though it was impossible for her to do so even after using endless length of rope) *Brahmam* here is acting as if it is tied by the *Guṅās* .

In *Krishṅa Karṅamrutha* there is a *slōkā*. 'What great wonder! The *Nirguṅa Brahmam* which is the essence of the Upanishads is remaining tied to the 'ural' (a Tamil word which means a stone contrivance used for hand-pounding of grains etc). In *Shatpadhī* the *Dāmōdharā Guṅamandhira* words follow one another, as if to indicate *Guṅamandhira* too is a similar state of being tied by *guṅās* .

When it appears with *Guṅa*(attributes) and *Rūpa* (form), he (*Āchāryā*) in a manner of enjoying such a state says *'Sundhara Vadhanāravindha'*

Sundhara - Beautiful. Vadhana - Face. Aravindha - Lotus. He describes *Bhagawān* thus 'He who has a beautiful lotus like face.'

Staunch Adhvaithins, not just in speech but those who had experienced Adhvaitha, have relished describing *Bhagawān's Rūpa* soundarya(beatiful form)and derived great joy from it. Many Adhvaithins who are *Bhakthās* have been mostly devotees of *Krishṅā*.

Līlā Śukhar who composed '*Krishṅa Karṅamrutha*' belongs to the Adhvaitha tradition. He hails from *Kēraḷa*. There only the Adhvaitha *Sampradhāya* prevails. In addition when he talks about his family, he says their family deity is Lord *Śiva* and that they hold '*Śiva Panchākshari*' as their most sacred manthra, that can deliver the higher state. 'Na kalu *vichāranīya*' -he says firmly 'there is no doubt about it'. Yet he trains his heart on *Krishṅā* and composes 'Karnamrutha' that bewitches us.

There was a well known and highly respected scholar, about four hundred ago. It was generally believed that he hailed from Bengal. He wrote an excellent grantha called 'Adhvaitha Siddh*i*'. He has also contributed many other *slōkās* for the Adhvaitha *Sampradhāya* (Adhvaitha tradition). He himselfe has written another grantha called *'Bhakthi Rasāyana'*. He wrote these works to show that there was no contradiction between Bhakthi, which was *Saguṅa Brahmam Upāsanā* and *jnānā* which is experienced.

Madhusūdhana Saraswathi was a great devotee of *Krishṅā*. There is an excellent *sthōthrā* about *Śiva* called '*Śiva* Mahimna *Sthōthrā*'. As you move north from *Māhārāshtra* and the states above that, every one will be familiar with it. Here many of you will know about it only after I mention the name. *Madhusūdhana* Saraswathi wrote a *Vyakyāna* (commentry) for *Śiva Mahimna Sthōthrā*, to show that it worships *Krishṅā* too. That is he wrote a commentry both from the perspective of *Śiva* and *Vishṅu*.

'An Adhaithin should not entertain bhakthi. Even if he does, it should be like what the *Āchārya* had - a bhakthi that considered all gods as one'. This is what all of us who have read Advaitha books, might think. Yet *Madhusūdhana* Saraswathi was completely devoted to *Krishṅa Paramāthmā* (in that form), even though he experienced Advaitha Anubhava.

Madhvāchāryā consecrated *Krishṅā* in Udipi. *Vyāsa Thīrthā* is one of the most important amongst those who lent great support to *Mādhva* school of thought and condemned *Śankarā's* Advaitha philosophy in the most severe terms. *Madhusūdhana* Saraswathi wrote several Adhvaitha treatises specifically repudiating *Vyāsa Thīrthā's* objections, point by point. He is the one who established the *Nirguña Brahmānubhava*. He is also the same one who sang in a soul stirring manner about the little *Krishñā* who yawns and stretches when he wakes up!

He has composed more than hundred *slōkās* on *Krishñā* in '*Ānanda Mandākini Sthōthrā*' and poured out his '*Guñanubhava Ānanda*'.

In one place he says 'I don't see any other thathva other than *Krishñā*' as if to say 'What is this Advaitha Thathva or the Dvaitha thathva?'

He says:

Krishñāth param kimapi thathvam aham na jānē

In a *slōkā* that starts with '*Dhyānābhyāsa*' he says thus:

'Yogis get to see some jyothi that is *Nirguña*, nishkriya (actionless) because they tame the mind. Let them continue to do that. Don't lament that we are not able to perform such *dhyānābhyāsa*, tame the mind and see that jyothi. Is not that same jyothi playing on the banks of the river Yamuna, as a blue light? (He refers to *Krishña Paramāthmā* thus). Let us keep looking at this. Let it keep giving joy to our eyes, for ever.'

Once one has left everything and has merged with the *Paramāthmā*, he knows through experience that 'The *Paramāthmā* is in everything. Everything is in that *Paramāthmā*. That *Paramāthmā* is indeed everything.' Therefore there is no need to leave anything. It is in this state that Advaithis think 'In reality there is no separation. Separateness is like *līlā* is it not? Why don't we too act as if separated like *Bhakthās* and enjoy the *Saguṅa*? Is it not like the ocean and waves that seem separate, even if it is one?'

That is how the *Āchāryā* too eulogises the *Guṅa, Rūpas* as '*Guṅamandhira*, Sundhara *Vadhanāravindha*'.

Because the *Bhagawān* - the *Nirguṅa Brahmam* which is without any attributes, is the abode of all *Guṅās* this is the essence or philosophy behind *Guṅamandhira*. If ascribed one *Guṅa* or a few *Guṅās* to the Lord, then he will not be *Nirguṅa*. It would mean that he is resticted within these few *Guṅās* . If we say some one is fair skinned (white), it would mean that he has fair skin (white colour) only. If we say some one is white(fair), also black, also green and stop with these colours then it would mean that he is of only these few colours. If we say that he is also of few more colours, then what will happen? Then it would mean that in reality he is not any of these colours and he is colourless. He seems to appear to be different colours at different times. Will it not be so? Because the *Bhagawān* is a *Guṅamandhira* with *Guṅās* like good-bad, beautiful-ugly, *puṅya*-pāpa, Dharma-Adharma, in reality he is not any of these *Guṅās* . The concept is that while remaining a *Nirguṅa* he also appears to be these various *Guṅās* .

He who is *Arūpa* (formless) appears in a beautiful form that we like so that we can pray to him with devotion. The *Āchāryā* describes the beautiful lotus - like face as 'Sundhara *Vadhanāravindha*'.

When the *Arūpa* (formless) gets a form, it (the nameless) also gets a name. The formless must get a name as soon as it acquires a form - as we say nama-*Rūpa*. The *Āchāryā* addresses it as '*Gōvindā*'

Sundara Vadanāravindha Gōvindā

Uniquenesss of Gōvindā and Hārā Nāmā

The name '*Gōvindā*' is very special. The names 'Hara' amongst the various names of *Īswarā* and '*Gōvindā*' amongst *Vishṅu*'s names are very unique.

People gather together for a 'Satsangha' or 'Satvishaya'. Yet it is human nature, that they start talking about various things within a few minutes. What do we do to stop their chatter and draw their attention to God? Some one says *'Nama: Pārvathī Pathayē'*. Immediately everyone (including those who have been talking) responds *'Hara Hara Mahādēva!'* Thereafter a Bhajan or a discourse starts. Thus Hara nama has that unique quality to attract the minds of several people towards *Īśwarā*, as if they are reigned. The Divine Child *Jnānā*sambhandha sang 'Let Hara's name envelope this world, to remove all its sorrows.' It is because of his singing thus, that Hara Nama has acquired this speacial status.

There is one more line similar to 'Nama: *Pārvathī Pathayē*', which is used to turn the crowd's mind towards God. That is 'Sarvathra *Gōvindā Nāma* Sankirthanam'. As soon as some one says this, the whole crowd responds with '*Gōvindā, Gōvindā*'. That is the effect of our *Āchāryā* singing 'Bhaja *Gōvindām*' when he was a child.

Millions of devotees raise '*Aṇṇāmalaikku Arōharā*' when we get together. We raise a '*Subrahmaṇyaswāmikku Arōharā*' when we are performing '*Kāvadi*' (a special vow fulfilment ceremony). Hara Nama envelopes us. Similarly in Thi*Rūpa*thi, where it is a daily festival, millions of devotees climb the mountain repeating the name '*Gōvindā*'.

This is the effect of the singing of two Divine Children.

Gōvindā Nāma seems more special than Hara Nama. Only after some one says 'Nama: *Pārvathī Pathayē*' others repeat 'Hara Hara *Mahādēva*'. In the case of *Gōvindā Nāma* the very first person says 'Sarvathra *Gōvindā Nāma* Sankirthanam'. Others repeat the same name.

One more thing staunch *Vaishṇavās* are unlikely to repeat the 'Hara Nāmā'. However every one repeats *Gōvindā Nāma*.

Perhaps that is why only for *Gōvindā* Nama the prefix 'Sarvathra' is used. Sarvathra - everywhere, at all times. 'Sarvathra *Gōvindā Nāma Sankīrthanam*'. Therefore if some one asks me what is the most unique name in Hindu Religion, I would say it is '*Gōvindā*'.

The name *Gōvindā* was given to *Bhagawān*, who is the ruler of all the worlds, when he came down to earth with great compassion, and he was herding cows with utmost simplicity. When he blessed all the cowherds and the gopis with great compassion and love. *Bhāgavatham* narrates this incident. This is referred to in the *slōkā* '*Utthruthanaka*'.

Indra became arrogant thinking that 'The world lives because of my rains'. At that time *Krishnā* was a small child in *Gōkula*. He wanted to teach Indra a lesson. Therefore he instructed the *Gōpas* (cowherds) that they should stop their customary worship for Indra. Instead he asked them to worship *Gōvardhana Giri*. Indra got really upset when this was done. In his rage he unleashed a torrent of rain over Gōkul with a view to washing it away. It was at this stage that *Bhagawān* lifted *Gōvardhana Giri*, (as Giridhara Gopala) blocked the rains and protected the poor people, and all the living beings including animals. Indra was completely exhausted and could not rain anymore. He came to the lord, fell at his feet and apologised. Then he also named him '*Gōvindā*' and performed the coronation ceremony for him, implying he was the protector of all lives. (Go not only denotes the cow, but also all living beings. Just as *Pasu* denotes all animals). That is why this part (in *Bhāgavatham*) is called '*Gōvindā Pattabhishēkam*'. *Gōvindā* is the Indra of the '*Gō's*. Vinda means pursuing something and attaining it. Gō not only refers to animals but also to the earth, space, speech and all *Indhriyās*. *Gōvindā* Nāma indicates that it is the destination that all these finally reach - the *Paramāthmā*.

'Gōvindā Who is without any 'KURAI'

In *Bhāgavatham*, *Gōvindā* is the name conferred on *Bhagawān* during his *Pattābhishēkam* (similar to Sri Rama *Pattābhishēkam* (coronation) *in Rāmāyańa). Krishńā* was not crowned like Rama as king of a large kingdom. Yet, since *Dēvarāja* himself,performed his *pattābhishēkam* this is considered very important. Amongst the various names of *Krishńā* we add the suffix 'Raja' only to *Gōvindā* thus calling him *'Gōvindarājā'*.

This thought occurs to me sometimes. Does not *Āńdal* in her Thirupāvai (devotional hymns thirty in number) address the lord '*Gōvindā* who has no grievance? Would any one think that *Bhagawān* has grievance on my account? It is we, who are ordinary mortals, who feel aggrieved all the time. Calling such a man specially as 'a man without grievance' seems to make sense. Why should we call *Bhagawān* that way? By saying this itself, does it not raise about that *Bhagawān* had some grievance?

On further thinking, it appears that *Bhagawān* had indeed grievance and it got removed when he became *Gōvindā*.

What was *Bhagawān*'s grievance? I mentioned about 'Rama *Pattābhishēkam*', did I not? Rama had a grievance is thiis regard. It was about the manner in which *Vālmīki* described the *Pattābhishēkam* in his *Rāmāyańa*.

Vālmīki has described it like this: 'Eight rishis like *Vasishtā*, *Vāmadhēva* (*Jābāli*, *Kāsyapa*, Kathyayana, Suyajna, Gauthama, and Vijaya) performed the *Pattābhishēkam* (coronation)for Sri Ramachandra *Mūrthi*. Do you know how it looked? It was like the Ashta Vasus (Eight Vasus) performing the coronation of *Dēvēndra*.'.

'*Vasavō Vāsavam Yathā*'. It means 'the manner in which the Vasus performed it for Indra known as *Vāsava*.'

It is this comparison, that irked Rama and became the cause for his grievance. Why? It is the very same *Vāḻmīki*, who has narrated in the Bala Kanda of *Rāmāyaṅa*, as to how Indra was ruined (because of his bad conduct). He had committed a deplorable sin by misbehaving with Gauthama rishi's wife Ahalya, whom he should have revered as his mother. He suffered ignomy because of the curse he received for it. It was Sri Rama, who gave the fallen Ahalya a new life because of his compassion. This is what brought him fame and people call him 'Pathitha Pāvana Sita Ram'.

When these were the facts that *Vāḻmīki* should have compared the very Indra to him, became *Rāmā*'s cause for grievance. That *Vāḻmīki* compared him - a man of integrity and fidelity to a philanderer who had sinned, was his grievance.

Earlier when the coronation was planned. Rama had to go to the forest. Thereafter his people had waited for fourteen long years with great anticipation, and now the coronation was performed again. One name for *Bhagawān* was Pattabhiraman. This *Pattābhishsēkam* is the auspicious conclusion, for *Rāmāyaṅa* Pārāyaṅa(recitation) or Pravachana (discourse). At such a great moment, he was being compared with some one who spoiled the purity of a lady which was restored by the very dust on *Rāmā*'s feet. Even if he was God, Rama was playing his role perfectly as a human being. Therefore he will be definitely aggrieved.

There was another grievance (Rama had). *Mahā Vishṅu* took the *Avathārā* of Sri Rama because Indra and other *Dēvās* could not bear the trouble caused by Ravana any more, and prayed to him for help. Ravana's son Meghanathan had defeated Indra in battle and had earned himself the title 'Indrajith'. Rama had defeated Ravana -such a powerful enemy and got his younger brother *Lakshmaṅa* to defeat Indrajit. Rama thus became Vijayaraghava. When he was going through his cornotation after completely rooting out the *Asurās*, he was being compared with someone(Indra), who was defeated in battle by Indrajit, who was defeated by Rama. Therefore, won't he feel aggrieved?

Vāḻmīki did not make this comparison keeping in mind the qualities of the characters. He only compared the grandens of the coronation to that of Indra pattabhishekam especially since there were eight rishis here just as there were eight Vasus there. In that enthusiasm, he wrote *'VasavōVāsavam Yathā'*.

This grievance in *Bhagawān*'s mind got removed only in *Krishṅāvathārā*, when that very Indra fell at his feet and himself. performed the coronation for *Bhagawān* and named him *Gōvindā*. *Āṅdaḻ* has referred to this in a suggestive way.

That which is without lacking anything is a *'Paripūrṅa Vasthu'*. Purṅam *Brahmam* Sanathanam'. That is why it is said that *Krishṅā* avatara is 'Pūrṅāvathārā (Pūrnam is what is whole)

(*The word 'Kura*i*' in the title of this chapter is a Tamil word which has two meanings - one is 'a grievance' and the other is what makes a thing imperfect or incomplete.)

Guru - Deiva 'Gōvinda'

Among the many reasons why the name *Gōvindā* is unique, one is that it is *Āchāryā*'s favourite. This is evident from Bhaja *Gōvindām*. Bhaja *Gōvindām* is unlike his other works such as *Śivananda Lahari*, *Soundarya* Lahari, *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā* etc. They are all prayers to deities. Bhaja *Gōvindām* is not a prayer to any god. The *Āchāryā* has generally dealt with how a man should lead his life, pholosophical advice discrimination, etc. This is for all people - *Śaivās*, *Vaisṅavās* without any difference. In such a composition he does not say in a general way 'Worship the *Paramāthmā*' but specifically says 'Worship *Gōvindā*'. We can then understand how much he likes the name.

Krishṅā was called 'Jagadguru' because he delivered Bhagavad *Gītā*, considered one of the world's foremost texts dealing with upadēsā. (We recite a slōkā *'Krishńam Vandē Jagadgurum'*). After him only our *Āchāryā* was conferred the title of 'Jagadguru'. Although he was a Jagadguru, our *Āchāryā* cherished the role of a *sishyā* and derived great pleasure in singing the praise of his guru, *Gōvindā Bhagavadhpādhā*. That is why the *Āchāryā* likes the name *Gōvindā* immensely - which is the name of the God as well as that of his Guru. There is internal evidence to show that the *Āchāryā* not only thought of *Krishńa Paramāthmā* but also his guru when he mentioned the name *Gōvindā*. He says in the opening *slōkā* of *Vivēka Chūdāmańi*.

Gōvindām Paramānandham Sadgurum Prańathōsmyaham

One of Three

The name *Gōvindā* is special in another way too. Earlier I had mentioned *Mahā Vishńu*'s favourite twelve names. *Gōvindā* is one of them. In addition, there are three names which have been chosen as very special names of *Mahā Vishńu*. We perform *Āchamana* (drinking a drop of water), one *Āchamana* for each of three names, then touch the different parts above the stomach. the twelve names. By this, the body is purified before beginning any *karmā*. The three names to be uttered during the three *Āchamana*s are 'Achyutha, Anantha, *Gōvindā*'.

Thus, *Gōvindā* is the only name, that appears both in the *Mahā Vishńu*'s favourite twelve, as well as the chosen special three for 'āchamanam'

Kēsavā- Nārāyańā- Mādhava- Gōvindā- Vishńu- Madhusūdhana- Thrivikramā- Vāmana- Srīdhara- Hrishīkēsa- Padmanabha-*Dāmōdharā* (The Twelve)

Achyutha- Anantha- *Gōvindā* (The Three)

The *Āchāryā* enjoys repeating '*Gōvindā*' thrice -'Bhaja *Gōvindām*, Bhaja *Gōvindām*, Bhaja *Gōvindām*'. When something is to be affirmed as truth it is repeated thrice.

It is not alone the *Āchāryā*, who has repeated the name *Gōvindā* thrice. *Āṇḍal* too has used the *Gōvindā* Nama in three places in her 'Thiruppavai'.

The last song, the 'Thirtieth' song of 'Thituppavai', is its '*Phalaśruthi*. If that is left out, she has addressed God as *Gōvindā* in the three earlier songs. In the twenty seventh verse she talks of Govinda.

Only in the twenty-eighth she talks of Govinda who is without any 'Kurai'.

In the twenty-ninth song she again talks of Govinda.

Divine Churn that Churns The ocean of Samsara

The *Āchāryā* addresses Bhagawān by the name *Gōvindā*. which is special in so many ways and says

Bhava Jaladhi Mathana Mandhara

'Bhavam' means *Samsāra*; 'Jaladhi' is the ocean. 'Bhava Jaladhi' is *Samsāra Sāgara*. Muttna means to churn. We must pronounce it as Muttna. Madana will become the name of Manmatha. Madana is to intoxicate. Manmatha got this name because he churns people's minds with '*kāma*' (desire) and makes them turbulent. We also churn(mathana) the yogurt. That is why the rod used for churning yogurt is called 'Matthu' (in Tamil). Mandhara means, the Mandhara mountain.

Bhava Jaladhi Mathana Mandhara

means 'you who are the Mandhara mountain who churns the *Samsāra Sāgara*!'

When the *Dēvās* and *Asurās* churned the ocean of milk looking for Amruta (nectar), they used the Mandhara Mountain as the churn, and the snake Vāsuki as the rope. Is it not?

The *Samsāra Sāgara* which is merely a field for dying and we need the *Mōksha* that is eternal (like Amruta). Therefore the *Āchāryā* prays to *Bhagawān* to appear as the Mandhara Mountain (to churn this *Samsāra Sāgara*). When the ocean of milk was churned, it was *Mahā Vishnu*, who took the form of a tortoise and held the Mandhara Mountain firmly (without letting the waves shake it). That is 'Kurma *Avathāra*'. In this *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā* itself there is a reference to *Bhagawān* supporting the Mountain and holding it firm (Udthrutha Nakha in the fourth *slōkā*). (*Bhagawān* has been a Udhrutha-Nakha on two occasions. Once during Kūrma *Avathāra* and later during *Krishnā Avathāra*.

By addressing the one who supported the Mandhara Mountain, as 'Bhava Jaladhi Mathana Mandhara' he thinks of him as the Mandhara Mountain, that helps in churning the *Samsāra Sāgara*. Here he describes him as the mountain, not as the one who supports it. What is the meaning of this? Why should he call him as the rod, which churns the *Samsāra Sāgara* instead of calling him as one who helps us to cross the *Samsāra Sāgara*?

When the ocean of milk was churned, first came the poison. Then only Amruta came out. Only after they churned continuously and removed all the bad things did they finally get to Amruta. We need to churn our life and *Samsāra* this way. It has its own waves. *Kāma-krōdha* etc are its various waves that are turbulent. *Īswara* thathva too is inside it like Amruta. If we churn the *Samsāra Sāgara* thoroughly, and get rid of the poison such as *Kāma-Krōdha* etc., first, then we will get the divine experience, *Īswara Sākshāthkāra* called Amruta. First, we must collect all the bad things, not for enjoying them; but to throw them out. It is like gathering all the trash in one place before throwing it out. All the bad things will remain until such time as we throw them out. *Bhagawān* himself comes as the churning rod, collects all of it together in a concentrated form. Performing *Pūjā*, Going on pilgimage, reading *sthōthrā*, meditating, contemplating etc are forms of *Bhagawān's* grace. By Sādhanas such as these, we must first churn the ocean of life, and collect the poison. Thereafter, we must send it out. After that, we must attain Amruta.

Therefore if we want for Amruta right in the beginning it will not be possible. We will get Amruta only after we have experienced and exhausted the poison. Life must have problems, *kāma, krōdha* etc. As we go forward, we must get rid of all these and stay with the good, in pure bliss.

We do not have to contantly lament, despair or lose hope because of all the bad things present in life. The *Āchārya* says in an encouraging manner

Bhava Jaladhi Mathana Mandhara

When we churn with a churning rod, we witness so much turbulence, and have to put in so much effort. In exhausting our previous *karmā*, and getting rid of our old *Vāsanās*, in churning things, we must experience the hard knocks (of life). We will get salvation only after several such trials and testing times. If we understand that *Bhagawān* Himself is causing such turbulence, so that we may get our salvation later, our fear, tears, diffidence and exhaution will vanish.

There is a churn rod in the hands of *Krishñā* consecrated by *Madhvāchārya* in Udupi. Sankarāchāryā says *Bhagawān* himself appears as the churning rod called Mandhara Mountain, and churns the *Samsāra Sāgara* (for us).

Bhagawān became *Dāmōdharā* when he was tied, the way a rope is tied around a churning rod. *Balakrishñā* was drinking milk from *Yasōdhā*, when she was churning the yoghurt. The milk which was being heated was boiling and was about to overflow. Therefore, Yasōdhā stopped giving milk to the child and got up. *Balakrishñā* got angry, and broke the pots and distributed the butter from the pots hanging above, to the monkeys. He became *Dāmōdharā*, when *Yasōdhā* tied him up in the end. This *slōkā* starts by addressing Bhagawān as *Dāmōdharā* and he is conceived as the churning rod. There are so many related thoughts that emerge throughout the *slōkā*. In that beauty, we also observe another thing.

When we churn the *Samsāra Sāgara*, why should we get the poison first? Why should there be difficulties in life? The answer to these questions is that, all this is God's sport. He has ordained Nature itself this way. The raw fruit must indeed taste bitter. After that that very raw fruit becomes astringent. Thereafter this taste must become Sour. Finally the sour taste must turn sweet. Similarly the bitter taste that is our *kāma*, *krōdha* etc, must slowly turn astringent, then sour and finally sweet.

Therefore, let us not lament that we have various problems and dōshas. Let us lead our lives thinking of *Bhagawān*, engaging in Bhakthi, performing all the prescribed karmānushtānās, serving others as much as we can. Then all these dōshas will vanish by themselves. We will be full of love, and sweet like a fully ripened fruit. If we do not have Bhakthi, Karmānushtānā, service, meditation etc the 'bitterness' will never go away.

At the same time, it is not right leading a life aimlessly, full of dōshas and continuing to be bitter. There is no point in lamenting about the dōshas either. If we kept performing our *Karmās*, prescribed for us, the bitterness that must change, will change. Everything will turn to sweet.

A Few Great Men as Role Models

That one must ripen little by little is a matter for an individual. If we take the society as a whole only very few people nature in this manner. We need not feel bad about it either. If we were to take the society as a tree, how many leaves are there in a tree? How many leaves and flowers wither away from season to season? If we compare the number of flowers that have fallen the tender sprouts. which are formed are very few. Even amongst those, the ones that ripen well little by little (without ripening ahead of time) at the end are very few indeed. Nature reigns like this.

Even amongst people many fall as leaves, flowers, dry leaves, raw fruits are those ripened ahead of time, some eaten by birds and monkeys. In the end, only a few survive to become ripe as fruits which are useful.

Bhagawān's sport allows for all these.

It does not matter, if all people in the society do not attain 'Pūrṅathava' (fullness); as a fruit is to the tree, if one in a million becomes full, that is enough. So many people are born and they go through *kāma-krōdha* etc. All this happens so that one *Āthmā* can become 'Pūrṅa'. Just as they finally collected a small pot of Amruta after churning such a huge ocean, it is enough if we get just a few role models who are the Amruta-thathva by churning this huge sea of humanity. The *Āchāryā* has referred to the *Bhagawān* here as the churning rod, that will help churn the 'Bhava Sagara' and attain a little Amruta as its essence. That is why he says 'Bhava Jaladhi Muttna Mandhara'. When he says that, it seems to reassure us that this *Samsāra* has some Amruta too. (Not poison alone). Do we get butter as soon as we start churning with the rod? It takes long hours of churning before we can get butter. Until that time, we should not hasten, get agitated or lose patience.

Every one has an opportunity to develop step by by step. The only thing that we have to ensure is that the rope does not slip from the churning rod. What is that rope? It is our Bhakthi! In '*Śiva*nanda Lahar*i*', the *Āchārya* says to *Paramēswarā* 'Tie my mind-monkey firmly with the rope of Bhakthi!' (Dhrudam Bakthya Baddhva). If we hold tight to our rope called Bhakthi, wound around *Bhagawān* who is the churning rod, then He will churn this *Samsāra Sāgara*, remove the poison that comes up first and finally deliver Amruta to us. He will give us *Mōksha* - the 'amara' state.

Birth-Death (Janana-Maraña) is indeed *Samsāra*. Deathlessness is Amruta. If there is no death, then there is no re-birth either. The concept here is that we must derive Amruta -the everlasting *Mōkshānandā*- from this *Samsāra Sāgara*, with the help of Bhakthi. For this to happen, we must have Bhagavadh-Anugraha, God's Grace.

Helping us to cross *Samsāra Sāgara* means to just renounce this world. Churning the *Samsāra* to get Amruta, implies not leaving *Samsāra*. It means understanding that *Brahmam* is in everything and which is everything and getting the Param here itself. We can interpret it this way. If we follow the path of *Jnānā*, we can renounce the *Samsāra* because of *Vairāgya* and cross it. If we follow Bhakthi, we have immense faith in His compassion. We therefore do not renounce *Samsāra* but being in it, we get the 'Amruta Thathva' with His Grace, by churning the *Samsāra*. We can interpret it in this manner too.

The first *slōkā* in '*Shatpadhī*' starts with crossing *Samsāra* '*Thāraya Samsāra Sāgaratha*:'. It ends with churning the *Samsāra* in the last *slōkā*. It ends in the big thought that we leave or keep aside nothing, but realise the *Āthma Thathva* in everything.

Essence of the Hymn: Removal of the Sufferings of Samsāra

In the first *slōkā*, he says '*Thāraya Samsāra Sāgaratha*:'; 'Take me across the *Samsāra Sāgara* to the shore on the other side'. In the next *slōkā*, he says 'I prostrate before your *Pādāravindā* which is capable of smashing the fear and pain of *Samsāra*' (Bhava Bhaya *Ketha-Chidhē Vandhē*). In the third one, there is no reference to *Samsāra*. In that he says 'Although

Paramāthmā-Jīvāthmās are one, in practice(*vyavahārā*) they are like the sea and the waves.' If we think a little deep, we can see the reference to *Samsāra* is implied in it. The *Vyavahārā* State is *Samsāra*. That is what is generally called 'Samudra'. (The Sagara in the first *slōkā* and Jaladhi in the sixth *slōkā* both mean samudra). There is a way to survive in the *Samsāra* Samudra without being hurt and drowned. Even though we are in the Dhvaitha state, we must consciously think thus: 'We are not a part of this Samudra. We are part of the *Paramāthma Samudra*; we are its waves. Just as the waves merge with the sea, we too must merge with the *Paramāthmā*.'

The third *slōkā* makes us think in this manner: 'Is it not the Samudra that has become the waves? Like-wise, is it not the *Paramāthmā* who has become us? If we remain thinking about him, and believe with determination that we are his waves, what can this *Samsāra* Samudra do to us?' Looking through the Adhvaitha lens I had said, it had the simplicity and humility of the Dhvaitha outlook. When we see it from the perspective of *Samsāra* (which is Dvaitha)we can witness the majesty of Adhvaitha in the view that 'Just as the waves are not separate from the ocean, we are not separate from the *Paramāthmā*' (this is inspiring in an otherwise dull *Samsāra*.) There is a reference to *Samsāra* in the fourth *slōkā* too. 'How can *Samsāra* not be destroyed once we get Bhagavadh *Dharśana*? - Na Bhavathi kim *Bhavathiraskāra*:?' This is the question here. In the next one, he prays to *Bhagawān* to protect him from the fears of the *Samsāra thāpa*. It says '*Bhavathāpa Pīthōham*'. Finally, in the sixth *slōkā* he describes *Bhagawān* as the churning rod that churns and delivers the *Āthma Thathva* (as Amruta) from the *Samsāra* Samudra. Thus it is evident that the essence of the *Shatpadhī sthōthrā* is trying to get relief from the problems of *Samsāra*, by starting with Bhakthi; a goal for all religious practices, *Āthma related Sādhanas* etc.

This *slōkā* ends with

Paramam Thāram Apanaya Thvam Mē

Thāram means fear. Mē - for me/my. Paramam - extreme/high. *Thāram* - fear. Thvam - you. Apanaya - remove.

We have different kinds of fears whether we will do well in life or not, will we get *mōksha* or not, fear of death. fear of rebirth. fear about the various sins we committed and whether we will go to Naraka(hell). Thus, we have so many fears. He (the *Áchārya*) prays to *Bhagawān* requesting him to remove the big fear of *Samsāra*.

As it Begins so it Ends

He started the first *slōkā* with 'Avinayam Apanaya'. When he ends the sixth *slōkā* too he says '*Thāram* Apanaya Thvam Mē', using the same word 'Apanaya'. The circle is complete because the word used in the beginning has now appeared in the end too. This indicates the *Pūrñathva* (completeness) of the *slōkā*.

Words like 'Thvam', 'Mē' appear after 'Apanaya'. The straight prose line for 'May you remove my big fear' is 'Mē paramam *thāram* thvam apanaya'. The word 'apanaya' thus will come as the last word. The word apanaya is taken forward and it ends with 'Me', to fulfil the needs of good poetry.

The same thing happens in Bhagavad *Gītā* too. In the *Gītā* *Bhagawān*'s advice starts with chapter two, eleventh *slōkā*. 'Āšochyān Anvāšochasthvam'. In the end, in the 66th *slōkā* of the eighteenth chapter it says

Sarva Dharman Praithyajya Mam Ekam sāranam vraja
Aham thvām sarva papēbhyō mōkshayishyāmi mā šucha:

The *slōkās* that appear before and after these *slōkās* are the preface and the epilogue.

'*Śucha*' -'*Śōchya*' are words that indicate worry, anxiety etc. First he says '*Aśōchyan Anvāśōchasthvam*'. It means 'You uneccessarily worry about people you need not worry about'. 'Oh! How can it be that I kill the Kaurava Army?' - To Arjuna who worried thus, *Bhagawān* said ' This war has to go on to protect Dharma. It is *Īśwara* sankalpa that these people have to be killed and it is predecided. Therefore you are worrying for people you need not worry for.' He starts with *'Aśōchyan Anvāśōchasthvam'*.

Finally when he ends he says ' Leave all the dharmas behind and surrender unto me. You leave everything to me. I will release you from all the sins. This is certain. Therefore do not worry at all.' He thus makes a commitment to Arjuna. He uses the words *'Mā Śucha:'* It means 'Do not worry, do not despair.' *Aśōcha* that appeared in the beginning and *Mā Śucha* that appeared in the end are both the same. The root '*śuch*' is common to both.

In *Shatpadhī* too (as it happens in the *Gītā*), the word Apanaya which appears in the beginning of the first *slōkā*, appears again in the end of the last *slōkā*. He started with 'Remove my lack of Vinaya(humility)' and he ends with 'Remove my fear'. To remove things that must be removed is more important than getting things that are to be acquired. If we remove things first, we can acquire things later. Removing it, acquiring it - are all these within our means? No. It is only His grace that removes things. That is why he prays 'Apanaya' - to remove the two things that must be removed. 'Arrogance and fear'. Fear is the opposite of arrogance. It indicates a weak mind. An evolved person, will neither have arrogance nor will he have weakness due to fear. We have both. Arrogance towards somethings. Fear towards somethings. The *Āchāryā* teaches us to pray to *Bhagawān* to remove both these things.

When the end of one *slōkā*, becomes the beginning of another *slōkā*, it is called *Anthādhi*. We saw how the *Āchāryā* played around with *Anthādhi* in one *slōkā* 'Udhrutha Nakha'. Now what he does is even more interesting. He has created a unique *Anthādhi* by using the first word of the first *slōkā* ('Apanaya')and in the last *slōkā* last line. Instead of saying first word and last word we must use first verb and last verb. That would be more appropriate. First word is 'Avinayam'. What follows is the first verb Apanaya. The last words are 'Apanaya thvam me'. After 'Apanaya' follows the word thvam. Therefore, the last verb too is 'Apanaya'!

Verb is called a *'kriyā padha'* in Sanskrit. It is evident that verbs are about 'giving work'. It seems that the *Āchāryā* has composed this intricate *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā* as an '*Anthādhi* of verbs', to make us work! Since the verb used in the beginning is the one used in the end we have to start again as 'Avinayam Apanaya' in the *Anthādhi* style. It looks as if he has given us the job of reciting this *slōkā*, again and again.

Expression of Surrender Like Phala-Śruthi

The next *slōkā*, the seventh *slōkā* that appears, is like the Phala-*Sruthi*. Typically, a Phala-*śruthi* describes a *slōkā*'s uniqueness and the benefits we derive by reciting it.

Shatpadhī means six *slōkās*. If we go by that, the *slōkā* ends with

Dāmōdharā Guṅamandhira
Sundara Vadhanāravindha Gōvindā
Bhavajaladhi Matthana Mandhara
Paramantharam Apanaya thvam mē

Why did we call '*Jayadēvā's*' compositions Ashta-*Padhī*? Because in every stanza there were eight lines, is it not? I had mentioned that the word *Pādha* denotes not only the line but also a whole *slōkā*. Just as *Ashtapadhi* has eight *slōkās*, *Shatpadhī* too is complete with six *slōkās*.

A seventh *slōkā* appears in the tradition of describing the greatness of the *slōkā* and the benefits of reciting it.

I had mentioned that the *Āchāryā* has used the same word in the beginning and the end (as it appears in the Bhagavad *Gītā*). It looks like the *Āchāryā* consciously composed the structure of this *slōkā* keeping the structure of the Bhagavad *Gītā* in mind. It seems even more so when you see the seventh *slōkā*. Because in this, the *Āchāryā* talks about *Sāranāgathi*, which the last *slōkā Gītā* speaks about.

Nārāyan̄a, Karun̄āmaya
S̄aranam karavān̄ī thāvakow s̄aran̄au
Ithi Shatpadhī Madhīyē
Vadhana Sarōjē Sadhā Vasathu

This is the seventh *slōkā*, which is like the Phala-*S̄ruthi* for the *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā*.

The *Āchāryā* has not explicitly spelt out the benefits of reciting the sthōthra. Instead, he has implied it. That is why I say that this is like the Phala-*s̄ruthi* (not exactly a phala-*s̄ruthi* in the traditional sense).

Our *Āchāryā* is so humble that he did not specifically outline such benefits even at the end of his '*S̄iva*nanda Lahar*i*' or '*Soundarya* Lahar*i*' He has indicated by way of suggestion.

'*Nārāyan̄a* - Oh *Nārāyan̄ā*. *Karun̄āmaya* - you who are full of compassion. *Thavakow Saranau* - your two feet. *Sāranam Karavān̄ī* - I surrender unto them. Ithi - This. *Shatpadhi*- *Shatpadhī*. *Mādhiyē*- my. Vadhana *Sarōjē* - the lotus that is my mouth. *Sadhā* - for ever. Vasathu- reside.

The reason for the *Āchāryā* to say 'Let the *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā* for ever reside in my mouth' is this. As I said before he wants us to keep repeating it again, and again.

'*Thavakow Śaranau*' we should pronounce it as '*Śaranau*'. When pronounce '*Śārañam Karavāñi*' we should do so with Sa as in *Śankara* etc. Charanam means feet. *Śārañam* is a place of surrender, asylum.

It is evident in many places here that the *Āchāryā* has composed this in a state of extreme 'Bhakthi and allowed those feelings to influence his work, rather than the differences between Dhvaitha, *Viśishtādhvaitha* and Adhvaitha. If we were to look at a pure Adhvaithic point of view, there is a clear description of *Saguña Brahmam* (which does not belong to adhvaithic way of thinking); the *Jīvā* is part of *Īśwarā* (as the wave is part of the sea) - the *Āchāryā* has included such thoughts in this *Sthōthrā*. Even in the end, he does not give prominence for *Jnāna Marga*, which is so important for Adhvaitha. Instead, he only advocates '*Śārañāgathi*', which is important for Bhakthi.

Śaranam Karavāñi Thāvakow Chranau

Śarañāgathi (Surrender) and being in the state of Brahmam-are One

Later when *Rāmānujā* established *Viśishtādhvaitha*, he used *Śarañāgathi* as an important means (in his religious practice). What are important for Sri *Vaishñavās* are Two *manthrās* called Ashtāksharam and Dhvayam, the last *slōkā* from the *Gītā* 'Sarvadharmān Parithyajya', the *Rāmāyaña Slōkā* where Rama explains his philosophy of *'Śarañāgatha Rakshaka Vratha'*, when *Vibhīshaña* surrenders to him.

After *Rāmānujā*'s time, they bifurcated into two sects - Vadakalai and Thenkalai (the Northern cult and the Southern cult) based on differences in this *Śarañāgathi* (concept). The Thenkalai sect says that surrendering to God completely and leaving everything to Him in the spirit of 'It is His way', is true *Śaranāgathi*. They quote the example of the just born kitten, which makes no effort to look after itself. It is the mother cat, which moves about holding the little one in its mouth. This is called *'Mārjāra Kiṡōra Nyāya'*. *Mārjāra* is a cat. Kiṡōra is a small baby. Therefore, this is called 'the Baby Kitten way'. The opinion of the 'Vadagalai' sect is.

'What does the baby monkey do? It holds tight to its mother. Similarly we must hold on to *Bhagawān* with our effort. Apart from this one effort, we must leave everything else to God.' They advocate *Ṡaranāgathi* as '*Markata Kiṡōra Nyāya*'. Markata is a monkey. *Markata Kiṡōra Nyāya* - The baby monkey way.

Sāranāgathi is basic to both.

The attitude of being *Brahmam* 'I am *Brahmam*' is central to *Jnāna Marga*. 'I am nobody/nothing' and completely surrendering to God is central to Bhakthi Marga. Both these are the same.

When we look at it superficially, it might appear as if there is a huge difference. Which might lead us to the question: 'How can this be? This is like a difference between the mountain and the mole hill.' If we look at it in depth (we will realise) both are the same.

When we say 'I am nobody, or nothing' the '*I*' here is different. When the Adhvaithi says 'I am *Brahmam*' that '*I*' is different. There he has forsaken his body, *Indhriyās*, intellect, mind saying none of these is true. He refers to the *Āthmā* (that remains) as *Brahmam*. The follower of the Bhakthi mārga prays thus 'Normally any *Jīvāthmā* thinks of its body, *Indhriyās*, intellect and mind as '*I*', due to *Ajnānā*(ignorance). We must be free from all these. Instead of being pulled in different directions by all these, we must surrender these at the lotus feet of the lord, as if there is nothing.' It is with such an attitude that the 'Bhakthi Mārgi' performs *Ṡaranāgathi* (surrender) - 'I am nothing'.

What the Adhvaithi refers to as '*I*', (which is outside of the *Āthmā* and rejects it) the Dhvaithi, *Viśishtādhvaithis* surrender at the lotus feet of the lord. Therefore, both are the same. The common goal for both is that arrogance,(ego) must be conquered, be destroyed.

The *Āchāryā*, who advocated *Jnāna Marga* in the Adhvaitha *Bhāshyās* and *Prakarañā Granthās*, remains as a Bhaktha here. He advocates *Śaranāgathi* to achieve the same goal. He says *'Śaranam Karavāñi Thāvakow Śaranau'* - I surrender at your feet.

He also indicates that *Bhagawān* the ocean of compassion will certainly protect the one who surrenders - the *Śarañāgathan*. He does this by using the phrase *'Karuñāmaya'*.

Nārāyaña Karuñāmaya

In the first *slōkā*, he starts with '*Vishñō*'. In the sixth *slōkā*, he addresses him as '*Dāmōdharā*' referring to *Krishñāvathara*. Here he says *Nārāyañā*. Although it might indicate '*Vaishñava*' philosophy, (because of the use of the name *Vishñu*,) it is the name *Nārāyañā* that appears in the Ashtakshari manthra important for it. Even the Azhvar has sung 'Her it is, I have found out. It is the Name *Nārāyañā*'. The *Āchāryā* too has referred to *Nārāyañā* while talking about *Saguña Brahmam* in his *Bhāshyās*. He has set up a practice that whenever some one prostrates in front of a Sanyasi, he should say '*Nārāyaña, Nārāyaña*'.

Here the *Āchāryā* says 'I surrender at the lotus feet of *Nārāyañā*', is it not? The 'Dhvaya Manthra' of *Vaishñavās* carries the same meaning, using almost the same words.

It makes one very happy to see such oneness between the Adhvaitha and *Viśishtādhvaitha* philosophies.

Six Slōkās and Six words

Ithi *Shatpadhī madhīyē Vadhana Sarōjē Sadhā Vasathu*

'Let this *Shatpadhī sthōthrā* with six *slōkās* always reside in the lotus of my mouth'. If we interpreted it the meaning this way, *Shatpadhī* would mean six *slōkās*. If we take Padham as a word and not as a *slōkā*, then too this *slōkā* will hold good. The *Āchārya* has played with words here to get this effect. There is scope to have the meaning 'Let these six words always reside in the lotus of my mouth.' How is it? Which are these six words?

The six words are the words that appear in the first half of the *slōkā*. '*Nārāyaṅā*', '*Karuṅāmaya*', '*Ṣaraṅam*', '*Karavāṅi*', 'Thārakow', '*Ṣaranau*' - are not these the six words in the first half of the *slōkā*?

These six words say 'Compassionate *Nārāyaṅā*, I surrender at your feet'. These are the six words that the *Āchāryā* wants to remain in the lotus of his mouth. It could be interpreted this way too.

We will attain Bhagawadh Anugraha if we keep repeating the six *slōkās* of *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā* or the first six words of the seventh *slōkā*.

'Lack of vinaya must vanish. Mind must become still. Compassion for all living beings must grow. Must be taken across the *Samsāra Sāgara*. *Bhagawān* himself must appear as the Mandhara, the churn rod, and grant Amruta - immortality.' Did not the *Āchāryā* suggest different such prayers in this *Sthōthrā*? The seventh *slōkā* implies that all the prayers will be granted if we repeat the *Shatpadhī Sthōthrā* and the first six words that come after that in the seventh *slōkā* which implies this but does not state it openly.

The Riddle of 'Bee' Gets Resolved!

Why did the *Āchāryā* say '*Madhīyē* Vadhana *Sarōjē*' - 'My mouth which is like a lotus'? It was enough to have said mouth; or vadhana. Why did he use an adjective. 'Vadhana *Sarōjē*'? If we describe the *Bhagawān* with phrases like Nayana *Kamalam*, *Pādha* Padmam, face like lotus etc, it seems appropriate. Even in this *Sthōthrā* describing the lotus feet of the Lord (*Srīpathi Pādhāravindhē*) and his lotus like face (Sundhara *Vadhanāravindha*) in some of the previous *slōkās* is right. Why is he, a bhaktha, using a phrase like 'Vadhana *Sarōjē*' to describe his mouth?

He is the *Āchāryā* who would not state the phala-*Sruthi* explicitly out of humility.

He prayed 'Remove my lack of humility' right in the beginning of the *sthōthrā*. However, there is an important reason why he is describing his mouth in such a special way.

While I began to talk about this *Sthōthrā* I explained that '*Shatpadhī*' means a bee with six feet. I also explained that the *Āchāryā* has used a pun here to name the *Sthōthrā*, because the *Sthōthrā* has six *slōkās* and there is a reference to the bee; did I not?

How is the association with a bee appropriate here? That riddle is now getting resolved.

What the *Āchāryā* wanted to say was 'The six *slōkās* and in addition the six words (from the seventh *slōkā*)- let them always remain in my mouth (tongue)'. At that time, it occurred to him that '*Shatpadhī*' is also a name for a bee. He has used the word '*Shatpadhī*' word in *Subrahmaṇya* Bhujanga and *Soundarya* Lahari.

When he prays to Thiruchendur Muruga by composing a 'Bhujanga', he says 'Hey Skandha! Just as the bee enjoys the lotus, let my mind the bee, which is turbulent because of the effects of Bhava (sagara), let it for ever enjoy your lotus feet.'

He says

Mana: Shatpadhō Mē Bhava Khlēsa Thaptha:
Sadhā Mōdhathām Skandha Thē Pādhapadhmē

The bee has several names such as *Brungā*, Bramara, Madhubhaga etc. Yet when he compared it to the mind why did he use the word *Shatpadhī*? This is revealed in *Soundarya* Lahari. He prays to *Ambāl* thus:

'My *Jīvā* is like a six legged bee, because of combining the five *Indhriyās* which are five karañas and the mind which is the sixth *karaña*. Let that (bee) remain buried in your lotus feet.'

Nimmajjana Majjīvā: Kārāña chraña: Shatcharañathām

Both *Pādha* and charaña denote the feet(leg). Shatcharaña means the bee, which has Shat-*Pādha*.

Although the mind too has been mentioned as the sixth *karaña* in addition to the five *Indhriyās*, it is the mind, which rules over the rest of the five. Therefore, even the mind is sometimes referred to as a six legged creature, taking into account itself and the five *Indhriyās* as the five other parts. That is why he says 'Mana: Shatpadho'.

Therefore here when he was about to say 'Let the six-*slōkā*, six-word *Shatpadhī* always remain in my tongue(mouth)' he was reminded of the bee. If the bee has to be in the mouth always, it can happen only if the mouth is a lotus, is it not? Is not the bee attracted only to the lotus? That is why he has used the phrase *'Vadhana Sarōjē'* here.

Let us look at it another way. A mouth of a Bhaktha which is constantly talking about *'Śrīpathi's Pādhāravindha*, Sundhara *Vadhanāravindha*, will itself become a lotus. Therefore saying 'My lotus like mouth' is not in appropriate.

Which is the bee in this Vadhana Sarōja?

It is the *Shatpadhī sthōthrā*!

That is why it is called the 'Bee *Sthōthrā*'?

When talking about Vadhana Sarōja, the lotus like face, I am reminded once again, about the *slōkās* composed by Padma *Pādha* and later Appayya *Dīkshitar*. I had mentioned these earlier too. In Appayya *Dīkshitar*'s *slōkā*, he says 'Just as Ganga flows from *Vishnu*'s Pada *Kamalam*, *Bhāshyās* flow from the *Āchāryā*'s mukha *Kamalam* (lotus face)'. He says '*Bhagavadhpādha* Srīman Mukhāmbuja'. *Mukhāmbuja* (Mukham+Ambuja) and Vadhana *Sarōja* that appears in the end of the *Shatpadhī sthōthrā* are the same. We saw the same *Bhagavadhpādhā* describing the Dēvaganga flowing from *Śrīpathi*'s *Pādharavindhā*, in the second *slōkā* of this '*Shatpadhī' sthōthrā*. Here the *Āchāryā* says that the *Bhagawān*'s feet remove the 'bhava bhaya ketha' of birth and death. However, Appayya *Dīkshitar* describes the *Āchāryā*'s *Bhāshyā* as 'Janana Harani' (that which destroys birth).

If the *Āchāryā* says that his mind the bee, should remain buried in the feet of *Subrahmanya* and *Ambāl*, I mentioned to you that stone inscription in Cambodia says that the heads of all the scholars are buzzing around our *Āchāryā*'s '*Pādha kamala*' (lotus feet) as bees. Thus, our *Āchāryā* has so many associations with the bee; it is only appropriate that he composed something called the '*bee sthōthrā*'. Let me tell you one more reason why it is appropriate.

I spoke to you about the Bhakthi our *Āchāryā* had for his guru *Gōvindā Bhagavadhpādhā*, is it not? As if to reflect that we recite something in our Mutt here, (sounds somewhat like the announcement for a king's arrival), we start with 'Jaya *Gōvindā Bhagavadhpādha Padhābja Shatpādha*'. Thus, the lotus-bee connection continues from *Gōvindā Bhagavadhpādhā*, our *Āchāryā*, his disciple *Padmapādhā*. We are blessed because we are able to pray to the *Bhagawān*'s mukha *Kamalam*, and *Pādha Kamalam*. At the same time, we are also able to think about the mukha *Kamalam* and *Pādha Kamalam* of *Bhagavadhpādhā*.

The *Āchāryā*'s prayer 'Let this *Shatpadhī* remain for ever in my mouth(tongue)' is on behalf of all of us. All our mouths should become the mouths where this 'Bee *Sthōthrā*' is buzzing all the time. If that happens our *Jīvā* which is a shat-*Pādha* consisting of our mind and the five *Indhriyās*, will for ever remain buried in the lotus feet of the Lord.

He (the *Āchāryā*) initially said '*Dhamaya* Mana: *Samaya* Vishaya Mruga *Thrushñam* ... *thāraya Samsāra sāgaratha*:' He prayed that our mind and *Indhriyās* should be tamed and must be retrieved from the *Samsāra* Sagra. Finally he has ended (the *sthōthrā*) by performing a *Sāranāgathi* of the mind and and *Indhriyās* at the lotus feet of the Lord. It is the lotus feet of the Lord which attract our mind with its beauty and blessings, let our hearts be totally absorbed in them, and finally enable us to effortlessly cross to the other shore of the 'bhava sagara'.

That is '*Bhagavadhpādhā*', our *Āchāryā*. If he himself is *Bhagawān*'s *Pādha Kamalam*, then his face too is like a *Kamalam*. The *Shatpadhī sthōthrā* remains there for ever. Let that keep giving us - the *Āchāryā*'s honey like words and *Bhagawān*'s honey like blessings.

Avinayam Apanaya *Vishñō*
Dhamaya Mana: Śamaya Vishya Mruga-Thrushñām
Bhūtha Dhayām Visthāraya
Thāraya Samsāra Sāgaratha:

Dhivya Dhunī Makarandhē
Parimaḻa Pari bhōga Satchidānandhē
Śrīpathi Padhāravindhē
Bhava Bhaya Khēthachhidhē vandhē

Sathyapi Bhedhāpagamē Nātha!
Thavāham na māmākīnasthvam
Sāmudrō hi tharanga:
Kvachana Samudrō na Thāranga:

Udhruthanakha - Nakhabhithanuja -
Thanujakulāmithra - Mithra Śaśidhrushtē
Dhrushtē Bhavathi Prabhavathi
na Bhavathi kim bhavathiraskāra:

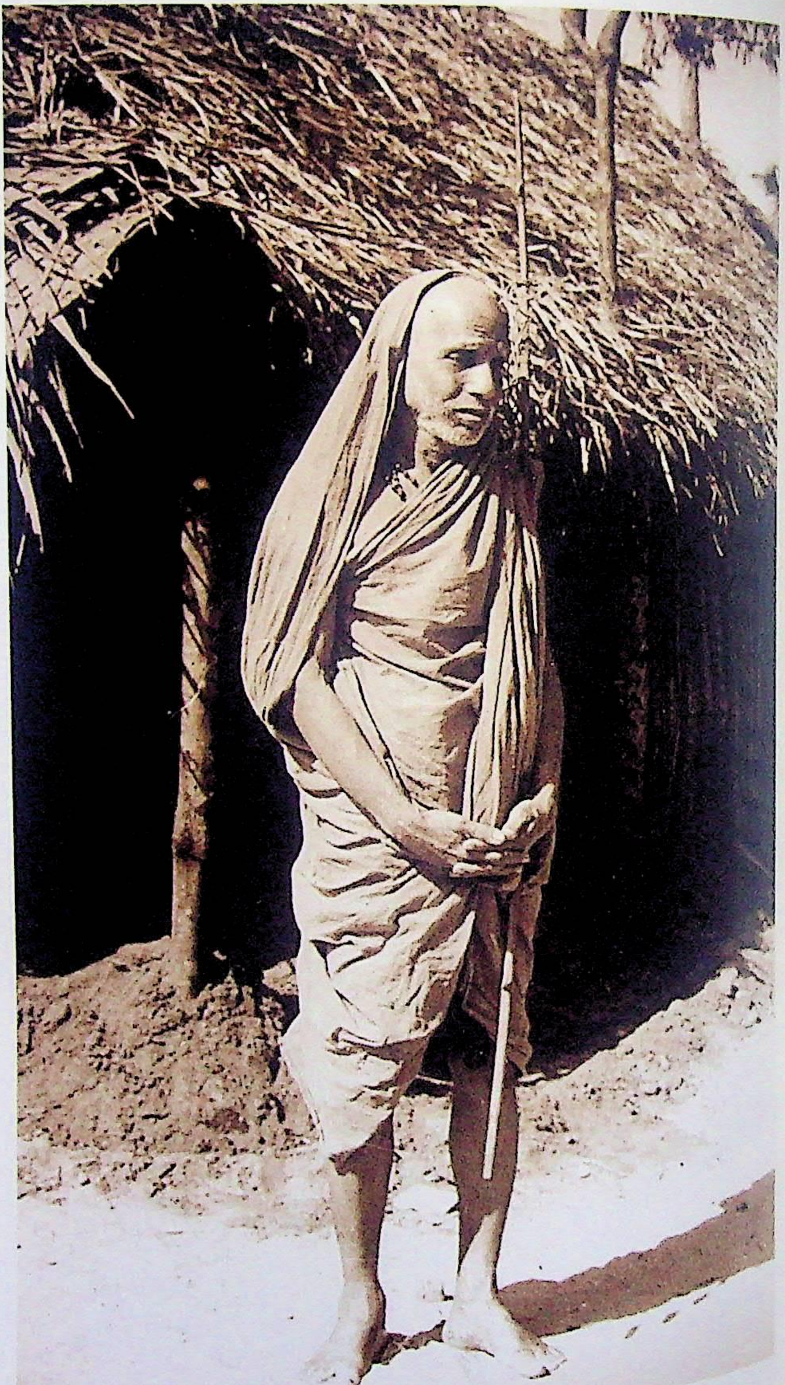
MathsyādhibhirAvathārai:
Avathāravathāvatha Sadhā Vasudhām
Paramēśwara Paripālyō
Bhavatha Bhavathāpa Pīthōham

Damōdhara Guṅamandhira
Sundaravadhanāravindha Gōvinda
Bhavajaladhi Mathana Mandhara
Paramandharam Apanaya thvam mē

Nārāyaṅa, Karuṅāmaya
Śaranam karavāṅī thāvakow śaraṅau
Ithi Shatpadhī Madhīyē
Vadhana Sarōjē Sadhā Vasathu

* * *

CULTURE



POETS' SENSE OF DIGNITY

Surpassing the Kings!

Kings have glory only in their own country. However, the learned are glorified wherever they go.'

Thus sang saint poetess Avvai. She had a lot of right to say that. She drew such fame and glory wherever she went. She had a reign of fame surpassing that of the kings. The tri-kings, *Chēra*, *Chō̱lā*, and *Pāṅdiya*, listened to her with absolute reverence.

When Pāri *Va̱l̲lal*, a benefactor who greatly patronized the poets, passed away leaving his two young daughters behind, Avvai very gratefully rose to the occasion, found grooms for them and performed their wedding. Because it was Avvai who sent the wedding invitation, all the three kings came to attend it. She was very pleased that they set aside their mutual rivalry and came together for her sake, not wanting to turn down her invitation. She sang, 'Joined together in one place, aren't you glowing like the three fires of *gārhapathyam*, *āhavanīyam*, and *dakshiṅāgni*, also called the *threthāgni*, that are maintained by the twice-born' This verse is found in *Puranānuru* (Part of the Tamil literature of the Sangham age).

A woman, and a ripe old one too, Avvai was so humble as to sing for just porridge. In spite of it, if she commanded so much respect from these kings, it was only because she was learned.

Poets were usually very highly learned. Therefore, they had attained tremendous glory wherever they went, even surpassing the kings.

They were also very well aware of their glory. Therefore, not having to appease anyone, even a king, they had a great sense of dignity, self-respect, and courage. A clear evidence for such courage is the very fact that this old woman dared to sing and popularized the verse the meaning of whichh hhaassbeen given at the begining.

Mahān - Poet, Difference

A great *jnani* or a *bhaktha* wouldn't be, in fact shouldn't be, highly sensitive regarding his honor and dishonor, rivalries, or ego. However, poets do not belong to this category. Poets are certainly above the level of common folk. The learned poets are certainly above the ranks of people who are regarded highly for their looks, authority, or wealth. Even so, they cannot be grouped with the *jnānis* and *bhakthās* who have gone on the spiritual path, discarding the world and the worldly life.

Even among great *bhakthās* and supreme *jnānis*, there have been several exalted poets. In our country, starting from the *vēdha rishis*, down to *Vā̱lmīki*, *Vyāsā*, then our *Āchāryā*, the *Nāyanmārs*, *Āzhwārs*, *Vēdhāntha Dhēśikar*, and then *Jnānadhēv*, *Thu̱lasidhās*, *Purāñdharadhās*, *Pōdhana*, and so on, have indeed been very highly spiritual while also being great poets. There is a saying that says, '*Nān - rishi*: *kāvyam kurvathē*.' - 'One who is not a *rishi* is incapable of composing poetry.' *Vēdhās* use the word 'kav*i*' (poet) to mean '*rishi*'. When defining the term 'kav*i*', it calls him a *'grāntha dharśi'*. It means, 'Only the one who possesses the ability to understand all the *sathyās* is a kavi.' Fitting this definition for a kavi, so many *mahāns* of our nation were kavis.

I am not talking about those kavis here. I am only talking about the people who belonged to a much later time than the ancient *vēdhā-īthihāsā* period, who were engaged in composing *kāvyās* (poetry) and producing literary works as their profession. I meant to talk about those kavis who are primarily considered as the authors of literary works.

In those days, kings were the main patrons of arts. Therefore, there were certainly quite a number of kavis and *vidhvāns* (scholars) who sang the glory of the kings in order to secure a place in the royal court or receive a large bounty such as '*akshara laksha*' as their prize. There were also those kavis who considered the king and his royal court as insignificant when their self-respect was compromised and didn't hesitate to leave it. There were even incidents in which very close bond existed between some kings and some poets, and when those kavis felt that their dignity was shortchanged, they had such a spirit of independence that they considered the king, with whom they had taken so much liberty, as of no significance. Speaking against those kings boldly, they had even walked out. This kind of incident has happened in the case of *Kāḻidhāsā*, who occupies the primary place among the poets of Sanskrit, as well as Kambar, who occupies the first place among Tamil poets.

Mahāns Who Had Turned Away from Their Kings

It is no surprise when *mahāns* reject the royal court. Even when invited by a king, with a great potential for acquiring name and fame, several *mahāns* have not yielded to that temptation. We certainly have to regard them with great respect for their exalted virtues. We glorify the stand that *Thyāgarāja Swāmigaḻ* took when he was invited by King *Serfōji*, which is revealed in his composition, '*Nidhi chāla sukhamā* ...' He had asked in this composition, 'Would the king's wealth provide comfort, or would Rāmā's presence provide comfort?' Similarly, several *mahāns* have revealed their stand that they would never sing about any king, but only about Īśwarā. *Nammāzhwār* says : 'I am not a kavi who has come to use my mouth to sing about a human.'

Sundharamūrthy Swāmigaḻ addressed all the poets and advised them, 'Why do you sing about this one and that one? Sing only about *Śiva*.' He has sung a whole *padhikam* (a section of

Devaram) with such advice. He has asked why should a person who doesn't give be praised as *Pāri Va*l*lal* (a great benefactor).

Furious with Appar *Swāmiga*l for spreading *Šaivam* (worship of Šiva), King *Mahēndhra Pa*ll*avā*, who was then following Jainism, sent his sentries to punish him. At that point, he sang bravely, 'I am no subject of anyone'. There is no higher evidence than this to display the courage of these *mahāns*.

Several *mahāns* who were just as great scholars as they were *bhakthās* or *jnānis* have cast away the opportunity to become an *āsthāna vidhvan* (poet in the royal court) as of no value. Nilakanta *Dīkshithar* was serving as the chief minister for Thirumalai *Nāyakar*. Once he became the subject of *Nāyakar's* unwarranted suspicion. Later, when *Nāyakar* realized his mistake and apologized to *Dīkshithar*, *Dīkshithar* thought, 'Enough of this royal service', resigned his post, retired to a remote village, and started living a very *vaidhika* (in accordance with *vēdha sāsthrās*) life. He apparently made a rule that no one from his line of descendants should go for royal service either. In the end, he even took up *sanyāsā*.

They say the same thing about *Vēdhāntha Dhēsikar*. *Vidhyārañya Swāmiga*l was the force behind the creation of the Empire of Vijaya Nagara. Harihara and Bukka, who were his disciples, established this empire and named it *Vidhyā Nagara* after their guru. Later, this name got corrupted and came to be called Vijaya Nagara. *Vidhyārañya Swāmiga*l was a great *adhvaithi*. He was an *adhvaitha āchāryā*, who had actually occupied the seat of Sri Sankara Mutt. He had an unusual level of erudition. As per the notion that the learned will espouse other learned, this *Swāmigal* had a great respect for *Dhēsikar*. For that matter, *Dhēsikar* was a *Vaishñava āchāryā*, who hotly denounced *adhvaitha*. *Vidhyārañyar* was of the opinion that erudition must be honored wherever it is present. Since he was the royal guru of the Empire of Vijaya Nagara, he sent an invitation to *Dhēsikar* to come and adorn the royal court. But *Dhēsikar* turned it down saying, 'Why do I need a royal court?' It is said that the reply that he sent for this invitation is the same *Vairāgya Panchaka* consisting of five *slōkās*.

When such elders, who are worthy of being called *mahāns*, cast away titles, positions, and the king's rewards, it certainly deserves much praise. However, we wouldn't accord any special laurels to them since these actions are of no surprise. What is truly surprising and deserves glorifying is when some of the kavis who were conducting and enjoying worldly life turned down the title of '*āsthāna kavi*'.

Vairāgya and the Sense of Dignity

The *mahāns* rejected the royal honors on account of *vairāgya* (renunciation of desires). The kavis did it because of their sense of dignity.

Since *mahāns* have risen above the feelings of dignity, they have discarded the attachment to dignity and honor. However, such disregard for dignity and making a lowly existence by people at a lower level cannot be considered in the same vein. It is very degrading to disregard dignity for the sake of fame and reward, enduring any amount of humiliation, just to retain the title of *āsthāna kavi*. Instead, if a kavi acted with boldness, independence, and courage, considering his stage, we must glorify him with special laurels. At the stage that we are in, we should also strive to emulate them by not trading our dignity for personal gain.

Now that I have already mentioned *Kāḻidhāsā* and Kambar, I will also narrate their stories.

Kāḻidhāsā and King Bhōjā

King *Bhōjā* was a generous benefactor who supported poets and scholars. *Kāḻidhāsā* was his *āsthāna kavi*. *Bhōjā* had great appreciation for finer aspects. He was very talented in composing poetry himself. For this reason, without feeling the distinction between themselves as the supporting king and the supported kavi, both of them were associating with each other as friends and colleagues at equal level. After such a prolonged association, they developed a great bond for each other.

Enmity Followed by Broken Friendship

The nature is such that something that occupies a very high place will hurl down deep when it is perturbed. When a good fruit spoils, it puts out an unbearable stink. When pure ghee spoils, it curdles the stomach and nauseates. Pure milk turns sour and curdles up if just a few drops of some bad substance mixes with it. Similarly, in a very deep friendship, if a small crack develops, it turns into very great enmity. When there is a slight impediment to an extreme affection and the pleasure that is derived from it, it becomes the other extreme with tremendous hatred, anger, and grief.

This is what happened to the close friendship that existed between *Kā̱lidhāsā* and King *Bhōjā*, and it turned exactly opposite.

Asked for His own Charama Slōkā

It was just unfortunate fate. As a blot for their mutual affection, all of a sudden, *Bhōjā* developed a weird desire. He felt that he had enjoyed the taste of *Kā̱lidhāsā*'s poetic excellence in many nuances. Only one was still left. He felt that he would never be able to hear it and enjoy it in his life. If he died, *Kā̱lidhāsā* would compose a *Charama* kavi (elegy) for him, wouldn't he? He would pour the depth of their friendship in it and make it overflow with a crushing motif of grief. He would use some hitherto unheard of analogy and compose the *Charama slōkā* that would melt the heart with the grief of separation. *Bhōjā* was wondering how he could listen to it, and he developed a keen desire for it.

Convinced that it would be a great *Charama* kavi, he was consumed by the desire to somehow listen to it. Therefore he did something very untoward.

He sent for *Kāḻidhāsā* and told him, 'Just imagine that I am dead. Due to the grace of *Ambāḻ's* sight, you have developed an ability to see even the impossible in your imagination, haven't you? So imagine just that and see how you would compose the *Charama slōkā* with your agitated heart in grief and do it right now and recite it to me. No telling, what will happen to anyone at anytime. Who knows what will happen to me in the next instant? What is the use if you compose this after that? Therefore, do it right now.'

Kāḻidhāsā's Refusal and Its Greatness

Kāḻidhāsā didn't agree to it. No one would agree to sing a *Charama slōkā* on someone while he is still alive, especially on a king and that too in front of him, right?

Even after this refusal, King *Bhōjā* was adamant and insisted, 'I am the king. This is royal order. If you do not obey it, I will banish you from the kingdom and send you into exile.' When the king was trying to intimidate *Kāḻidhāsā* in this manner, other ordinary kavis in his place might have agreed to do it. They might have thought, 'Why should I earn the enmity of the king? Why should I lose my home and place in town, get banished and suffer, just for the sake of not singing his *Charama slōkā*? Let me go ahead and sing as he wants and receive a platter full of gold and ruby.'

But *Kāḻidhāsā* didn't approve of it. He didn't have the cowardly thought of, 'Why should I suffer, going against a royal order?' Nor did he have such lowly thoughts of accumulating a huge bounty by singing as per the king's wish for his own selfish gain. Without giving up his self-respect, he disregarded *Bhōjā*'s order and spoke up his disagreement very strongly till the end with a sense of independence. He declared that he would rather go into exile and then left, giving up his dear *Bhōjā*, *Bhōjā*'s kingdom, and his own home and all his belongings.

I merely wanted to point out the sense of dignity that poets had, but this episode reveals even more than that. In addition to this feeling of dignity, this episode brings out several other specialties of *Kāḻidhāsā*'s character. We see his true, friendly heart here. Just as a mother wouldn't be able to bring herself to sing an elegy for her child who is very much alive, due to his adherence to *snēha dharma* (norms of friendship), *Kāḻidhāsā*'s mind wouldn't let him compose the elegy by imagining *Bhōjā*'s death.

There was another reason for his inability to sing this imaginary *Charama* kavi. *Bhavabhūthi* reveals a truth about *rishis* through the words of *Sri Rāmachandhramūrthi* in his Utthara *Rāma Charithā*. 'Ordinary people recount what actually happened. On the other hand, whatever the *rishis* say seem to actually happen. In other words, in the case of normal people, they simply verbalize an existing matter, whereas, in the case of *rishis*, the matters go on and attach themselves to the words spoken by these *rishis* and become existent, or true. - *vācham artho(a)nudhāvathi*' says *Rāmā* when he talks about *Vaśishtā*. Through this verse, *Bhavabhūthi* reveals a general truth.

A *rishi* and a blessed kavi who has received a divine benediction are one and the same. Therefore the words of *Kāḻidhāsā*, who had received the total grace of *Ambāḷ*, also had the same power. That is, using his words, whatever *kavithā* (poem) he composed, would actually become true. What he imagined would become *sathya*.

Therefore, had he obeyed King *Bhōjā* and sang an imaginary *Charama* kavi, *Bhōjā* would have really become subject of that *Charama* kavi!

Kā̱lidhāsā revealed even this aspect to *Bhōjā* without holding it back.

In spite of all this, the normally virtuous *Bhōjā* felt, 'Well, I am the king. How can a subject not obey me? Even while faced with the risk of losing my life, how can I take back my own words and accept what a subject says?' This is a kind of problem caused by authority. He was so stubborn.

Kā̱lidhāsā was even more stubborn and left the town altogether. His sense of sacrifice and the compassion that he had for the other kavis are also revealed by this demeanor.

How is that?

What would happen if *Kā̱lidhāsā* did sing this *Charama slōkā*, either giving in to *Bhōjā*'s pressure, or considering it to be his kavi dharma to fulfill a strange fan's wish to receive a great *kavithā*? *Bhōjā* would of course pass away. *Kā̱lidhāsā*'s fame, wealth, status, etc. wouldn't suffer any decline on account of it either. Other kings would be competing with each other to invite him to their courts and shower their hospitality and reward. But *Kā̱lidhāsā* wasn't thinking only about himself; he also thought about the situation of all other kavis. He, as well as a few other kavis who had a lot of fame at a level just below him, wouldn't have to worry about which king is in power and who isn't. They would have their needs quite well taken care of. But what about the numerous others, who were not that well endowed with fame or brightness? What would be their plight when *Bhōjā* was gone? After the demise of *Bhōjā*, who showered generously on anyone who sought him out, which king or lord would patronize these kavis? Over and above all other hardships that could be caused by the death of *Bhōjā* resulting from his *Charama slōkā*, he considered the lack of support that would result to those in his poet fraternity who had more modest skills, as the most significant.

Therefore, though he could have exercised his option to compose this *Charama slōkā* and get a huge reward of '*akshara lakshan*' or even '*akshara kōti*' from *Bhōjā* even in advance, he opted not to do that. With a great sense of sacrifice and love towards other poets with lesser ability, he chose to leave the kingdom and go into exile.

Disguise

The town that *Kāḻidhāsā* left is called Dhara Nagara. It is currently called Dhar, a town in Madhya Pradesh. This Dhar is about forty to fifty miles south of Ujjaini, which was the capital of Emperor *Vikramādhithyā*, during whose time, the community of scholars as well as the poets were enjoying a glorious status.

No matter where he ran off to, leaving *Bhōjā*'s kingdom, *Kāḻidhāsā* would have been recognized and glorified. He did not want that to happen. He felt that he needed no one's patronage after his dearest friend *Bhōjā* had sent him away. He thought that if he let that happen, it would only be tantamount to betrayal of friendship. He had such lofty feelings. So he decided to put on a disguise while roaming around the country so that no one would recognize him as *Kāḻidhāsā*. He thought of keeping himself alive in such a disguise just in case of the dawn of a better time that could reunite him with *Bhōjā*.

The story goes that he took upon the disguise of someone like me! That is, he put on the guise of a *swāmiyar*!

A few days after *Kāḻidhāsā* left town, *Bhōjā* couldn't stand his separation. So he also set out searching for *Kāḻidhāsā* in the guise of a rustic fortune-teller. The story goes that he did locate him in a very interesting manner.

The reason for my narration of this story is to point out that there have been several kavis who didn't simply submit to someone, even if he were a king, and saved their dignity and were true to their conscience, and *Kāḻidhāsā* was one among them.

Traditional Tales and Research

I mentioned two names: Dhara and Ujjaini. Dhara was the capital city of the kingdom of *Mālava*, ruled by *Bhōjā.* Ujjaini was the capital city of a neighboring kingdom on the west called Avanthi. Both *Mālava* and Avanthi are north of Vidharbha, which used to be a kingdom spread out between the rivers *Krishṅā* and Godhavari, but now denotes a small place called Berar. Some research scholars claim the following. - Ujjaini, the capital city, is itself called Avanthi sometimes. Emperor *Vikramādhithyā* who ruled from there was really the patron of *Kāḻidhāsā*, not *Bhōjā.* The '*Bhōja Prabandham*' was written by someone called Pallalan, using a collection of folklore. There is no authenticity to the contents of '*Bhōja Prabandham*'. - These scholars have differences of opinion even among themselves regarding who this *Vikramādhithyā* is, whether he is Emperor Chandhra Guptha of Ujjaini who had conquered the Sagas and established the *Vikramā* Sahaptham, or Chandhra Guptha II of the Guptha dynasty who had ruled from Pataliputhra, etc.

They say that this uncertainty is not limited just to *Kāḻidhāsā*. They claim that made-up stories have spread about various other poets, their era, and place as well - not only that of Sanskrit literature, but also of other languages. For example, in Tamil, there is a story that *Thiruvaḻḻuvar* and *Avvaiyār* were contemporaries, actually siblings. There are also other stories that make *Avvaiyār* a contemporary of Kambar, *Ottakkūththar*, and *Pugazhēndhi*. They claim that these are all mere stories, not compatible to historical facts.

Let it be a mere story or fact. I feel that they should be considered as they are and appreciated. The poets who are described in these stories have composed several *kāvyās* and *dramās* using imaginary characters. They have added even more imagination to real characters and incidents to increase their literary appeal. Ramayana was sung by *Vālmīki*, Kambar, and *Thulasidhās*, each in his own way. Kritthivas presented it in a completely different way. Why is it so? It is because, each one of them made changes to the actual events to suit their own power of imagination, experience, taste, and the purpose behind their effort. They have been changed under the opinion that if there is some truth to the practical reality, an exalted kav*i's* imagination and purpose also have a truth. We also benefit by enjoying reading these *kāvyās* and *dramās*.

Just as these kavis made up other characters, when other poets and people make up stories having these kavis themselves as characters, we should enjoy these works and benefit from the truths and morals that are revealed by these stories as well, right? These stories might have been made up by the general public rather than the society of poets. Nevertheless, when these are traditional stories that have been accepted, enjoyed, and benefited from by generation after generation in our nation that comes under a great culture, they do acquire a special weight, a weight and a value that cannot be disregarded casually.

Just as the saying goes 'where there is smoke, there is fire,' these stories wouldn't have been generated without some basis. A few might be baseless, but everything wouldn't be so. Even when the details related to places, names, and time appear erroneous, the incidents from a story would have some basis with respect to the characteristics of the kavi whom the story is about.

I must mention one aspect in these kinds of stories that is simply not acceptable. I am referring to those stories that associate these kavis, whether it is Kambar or *Kālidhāsā*, to *dhasis* (prostitutes). There simply couldn't be any truth in depicting these great kavis as having treaded in the wrong path in their personal life when they have composed *kāvyās* and *dramās* of the highest quality, instilling *bhakthi*, shining the lofty concepts of philosophy and *vēdhāntha*, and reflecting the highest aspects of culture, etc. You might ask, 'Why then is it smoking if there is no fire?' We can cite a fire that could be the basis for this smoke. In accordance with the defining characteristics of a *kāvya*, it is bound to contain plenty of the aspect of romance (*sringara rasa*), isn't it? This is the fire for the smoke. They have made up these stories under the mistaken impression that these kavis must have been greatly involved in it themselves in order to bring out so much of it in these *kavithās*.

We see that the actors and poets of later times have adopted a more relaxed lifestyle. Simply for this reason, we must not deduce the same about these ancient kavis, who were part of the royal courts that were conducted in a very *Sāsthric* manner and who had earned great respect from the scholars of those courts. One or two people might have been like that too. But it is not appropriate to clump them all together like that.

Except for this one aspect, they must all be accepted and enjoyed, at least as stories.

Kambar and Kulōtthungā

Let me come to Kambar now.

Let us not go into the controversies regarding Kambar's time as anywhere between the tenth and the twelfth centuries. Let us not worry about who was ruling at that time, whether it was *Vikramā Chō̱lā* or *Kulōththungā*, and if *Kulōththungā*, which particular *Kulōththungā*, etc. All we should consider is the story. All we need to do is to recognize the seed for his refined character in it and listen to it with due respect, it being a mere story notwithstanding.

Just like *Bhōjā* and *Kāḻidhāsā*, Kambar and *Kulōththungā* had a very close friendship. So Kambar used to take a lot of liberty with *Kulōththungā*.

One day, *Kulōththungā* mentioned with great pride that he was having a large empire under his control.

Kambar responded immediately, saying, 'Though the whole empire is under your control, you are under my control, don't you?' He meant it in a light-hearted way, taking liberty with him on account of his affection for him, without any real ego of authority.

Īśwarā Himself is referred to as '*bhaktha paradhīnan*' ('under the control of His *bhakthās*'). Referring to *Īśwarā* as '*Īśwarā* is contained within the heart of the one who performs service' is only an honor to Him, isn't it? Similary, Kambar thought with a naive heart that his statement only denoted such containment of the king of earth within the king of kavi (kavi also means poetic work). He thought that it was actually honoring his refined taste that showed a lot of respect for arts.

Unless someone who is on the seat of authority is really vigilant, the intoxication of that position is bound to get all into his head at one time or another.

That is what happened to *Kulōththungā* at that time. He was infuriated, thinking, 'What is this? This poet is calling himself as higher than me, the king.'

I already mentioned that extreme closeness is what changes into extreme enmity, didn't I? The same thing happened in this story also.

Intricacies of Friendship Turning into Enmity

The reason for this is – when people who are not that close to us say or do something that we don't like, we might explain it away as 'They do not know my mind. Therefore, they don't know how to behave to be acceptable to it. This doesn't have to be taken too seriously.' Even so, when these people do something that we don't like, we do find it as a fault; we do get angry. But it won't seem like a huge fault; we won't feel an uncontrollable anger. On the other hand, when someone who is very familiar with us do something that we don't like, we feel, 'They know my mind very well; in spite of it, they are behaving like this, upsetting it. Is it proper for them to have such a disregard for my feelings?' We get extremely angry and feel as though they have committed an unforgivable wrong.

In the same manner, the *Chōḻā* king felt that Kambar didn't give him respect and Kambar felt that the king didn't understand his mind. Both of them became extremely upset and exchanged strong words.

Just as in the story of *Kāḻidhāsā*, the *Chōḻā* king also told Kambar to leave his kingdom.

The king said, 'In response to my statement of 'This large empire is under my control', you said, 'You are under my control, didn't you?' Now see for yourself. You are the one who is subject to the control of my order and have to leave this *Chōḻā* Empire that is within my control.'

Kambar's Flare Up and Vow

When there was such a royal order, others might have prostrated to the king and pleaded for forgiveness. Especially if such a person was an *āsthāna kavi*, he might not have liked to lose the king's patronage and thought, 'It was of course impertinent of me to have said that a ruling king is under my control.' He might have taken his words back at that point and retained his position at the court.

What did Kambar do? His sense of dignity overcame him, and with a bruised self-respect, he retorted : 'You are the king? Is this *Chōḻā* country yours? Did I study Tamil counting on you?'.

So saying, telling *Kulōththungā* off, he simply left the kingdom.

Just before leaving, he also said something else.

What I just quoted was only the first part of the verse that Kambar spoke at that time. In that first part, he asked, 'Did I study Tamil and compose *kavithā*, only to depend on you for my support?' In the second part, sounding like a challenge, he said, 'What if you are not there for me? Aren't there other kings who invite me, 'Come, come' and honor me? Is there any king at all, who doesn't want to have me as his *āsthāna kavī*?'

Not just 'like' a challenge - He made a real challenge and said, 'You said that the king of kavis cannot contain the king of earth within himself. Instead, you said that it has to be the other way around, didn't you? Now you see. I will come back to you, bringing the *Chēra* king, whom you regard with fear, as my '*adaippaikkaran*' who will be under my control.' Declaring this vow, he departed.

'*Adaippaikkaran*' is a servant who carries a box containing *thambulam* (betal leaves and nuts) for a gentleman and provides the folded betal leaves at his master's request. '*Adaikkai*' means 'betal nut'. The box or bag where it is kept along with the betal leaves is called '*adaippai*' or '*adappam*'.

Comparison of Kāḻidhāsā and Kambar

You might say that in a similar situation, when the King *Bhōjā*, who was *Kāḻidhāsā*'s dearest friend up until that very moment, banished him away, he didn't want to betray the king in the eyes of the world. Hence, with a magnanimous heart, he had determined not to go to any other king. You might ask if it is becoming of Kambar to have made this challenge.

Under each of their circumstances, what *Kāḻidhāsā* did was right and what Kambar did was right as well. What difference of opinion did *Kāḻidhāsā* have with *Bhōjā*? - Only his request for the *Charama* kavi. Why did *Bhōjā* come up with such a request? æ Only because of his tremendous affinity for *Kāḻidhāsā*'s power of words. Only because he felt that the *Charama* kavi that *Kāḻidhāsā* would compose after his death would be heartrending and desiring to hear that even while he was alive, did he insist on it. Thus, even though there was a difference of opinion, the fundamental reason for that was that *Bhōjā* was infatuated with *Kāḻidhāsā*'s *kavithā*. *Bhōjā* was prepared to ignore the unpleasantness of hearing about his own death, something that everyone fears as inauspicious, for the sake of enjoying *Kāḻidhāsā*'s *kavithā*. After leaving such a great fan of his, how could a great man like *Kāḻidhāsā* have the heart to seek the support of someone else? That is why, he determined that his *kavithā*, which was deprived for *Bhōjā*, shouldn't be given to anyone else, and he assumed the disguise of a crazy *sanyāsi*. Kambar would have done the same thing if he were in the same situation.

What was the real state that Kambar was in? What he had said with an affectionate sense of liberty should have been taken by the *Chōḻā* king in the right spirit. Or he should have considered it as a joke without taking it seriously. Or even if he went one step lower, he should have simply warned Kambar slightly, saying, 'Whatever it is, I am the king. Therefore, I have the necessity to secure the authority of my position in the eyes of the subjects. So, if you take too much liberty, that spirit might spread in the world and the respect for royalty might get diminished. Instead, since he flared up and went on a tirade, saying, 'Hah, hoo! Let's see who is controlled by whom! 'Royal order, etc.,' Kambar would also feel like challenging in anger, right? *Kāḻidhāsā* would have done the same thing in that situation.

Later in the story, Kambar's big heart is revealed as well.

Visit to Chēra Kingdom and Chēra's Noble Virtues

True to his words, Kambar went to the kingdom of *Chēra* and drew the king through his *kavithā*. He had earned the king's very great respect and regards.

The *Chōḻā* king, who had driven him away, became quite restless here. He was also a person with great taste, possessing highly noble qualities. Therefore, he couldn't stand for too long, the loss of the one who was renowned as the emperor among all the poets who were ever produced in the land of Tamils.

He sent messengers in all directions to inquire about him and bring him back. He had also sent some spies.

So he came to know that Kambar was in the *Chēra*'s *sabha* and that *Chēra* was showing a lot of reverence and *bhakthi* towards him and was patronizing him.

He sent a messenger there too. He sent a letter admitting that what he did to Kambar was wrong and sent his apologies. He also requested him to come back to the *Chōḻā* kingdom and adorn the court.

Kambar was overcome with the old affection as well.

He took leave of the *Chēra* king and started out for the *Chōḻā* kingdom.

Chēra was aware of all the old stories. So he said, 'Didn't you take a vow that you would return to the *Chōḻā* king, taking me as your '*adaippaikkaran*'? How come you are leaving without me now? Here, let me carry the betal nut box and come with you.'

We see *Chēra's* great quality here. He had the utter humility to go a rival king's court as a servant of someone who had earned his respect! The same story that mentioned the ego of one king also mentions the humility of another one. This is why, even though it is a mere story, we must take these into consideration.

The reply that Kambar gave for such address of the *Chēra* king shows his own greatness as well. He said, 'Oh, he just said something in anger and as my dignity was hurt, I also took a vow in return. When he has sent for me now, forgetting his anger, I should also go there, forgetting my old sensitivity and the vow. That is what is becoming. Moreover, you are a ruling king. Though you are coming forward to doing service because of your humility and affection, unless there is a real need, it is not appropriate for me to accept it.' So saying, he took leave.

We will see how his refined culture shone even brighter at the end of this story.

In Chō̱lā's Court, *Chēra* Appears as 'Adaippaikkaran'

Kulōththungā received Kambar, who had returned home, with all respect. Kambar became an *āsthāna kavi* in his court again.

After some time, *Chō̱lā* hinted at Kambar that he didn't seem to have met the challenge that he took earlier.

Kambar thought that the 'real need' that he had mentioned to *Chēra* earlier had now come. He thought that he must indeed save his self-respect.

He sent a message to *Chēra*.

Chēra king immediately left for *Chō̱lā*'s court and entered it in the guise of an '*adaippaikkaran*'.

At that time, *Chō̱lā* and Kambar were engaged in a conversation. When Kambar saw *Chēra* in the guise of '*adaippaikkaran*', he felt very bad. However, he thought, 'I did take this vow. I shouldn't give *Chōḻā* another opportunity to throw yet another hint.'

So he didn't even take notice of this fake '*adaippaikkaran*', nor did he receive him.

Chōḻā couldn't even guess that the person who was standing in all humility with the betalnut box was indeed the *Chēra* king. He thought it must be someone from the *Chēra* kingdom that Kambar had hired.

During the middle of the conversation that he was conducting with the *Chōḻā* king, Kambar just stretched his hand out in the direction of *Chēra* while still not paying attention to him. Immediately *Chēra* rolled the betal leaf and very humbly passed it to Kambar. Without even turning around and acknowledging him, he received it and just held it in between two of his fingers. He didn't put it in his mouth though.

In the same manner, he received two or three such rolls of *thambula* and again held them in between his fingers.

Then he just signaled to *Chēra* that he could leave. Immediately he left.

Reaching the outside entrance, he climbed on his horse and sped away. Only then did *Chōḻā* realize that it was really *Chēra* who was there all along.

Just to indicate that he was indeed *Chēra*, as he was leaving, he dropped his identifying ring behind!

Chōḻā then addressed Kambar and said, 'Hey, Kambar! What have you done? You never told me that the one who came was really the *Chēra* king! *Chēra* being such an expert horseback rider, no one can catch up with him any more!'

Kambar replied, saying, 'Oh, *Kulōththungā*! *Chēra* came here only by my invitation. You hadn't issued any invitation to him. When he came to a place as an uninvited guest only for the sake of saving my honor, I have to save his honor too, right? Had you known that it was *Chēra*, I don't know what kind of reception you would have extended him. He came on my business. Therefore, I wanted to let him leave as soon as my business was over. That is why I didn't introduce him to you.' Again, Kambar's refined culture is apparent.

Then *Kulōththungān* asked, 'Is that so? All right. But then, why didn't you put those rolls of betal leaves in your mouth? Instead, why are you still holding them tucked in between your fingers?'

It is in Kambar's answer to this question that we see the height of his great quality.

Kambar said, 'If a king said that he would carry the betel box for someone else, it shows how humble he is. Then, how should the recipient of this service be? Can he be rough and tough? Shouldn't he also display humility? It was just our bad time that you said something first, and then I responded and took this vow, and just to save my self-respect, I had to fulfill it. For the sake of that, I had to bring in one of the tri-kings as my servant. In order to not let you recognize him, while I conducted myself as a real master, I had to receive the *thambulam* from him in an indifferent manner. As though all this is not enough, if I had actually put it in my mouth and eaten it, it would have been tantamount to having established myself as a real master, actually using his services.

'What was my vow? - Only that I will bring the *Chēra* king as my servant. So his role in this was only to carry the box and serve the *thambulam*. Beyond that, it is not his job to make the receiver actually eat it. Therefore, though I made the *Chēra* king do all his duties as a servant to fulfill my vow, I did not want to also eat it and establish the status of a master.'

Not only did Kambar save his own dignity and self-respect, but he also saved the dignity and respect of the *Chēra* king.

While poets like *Ottakkūththar* and *Pugazhēndhi* had remained as the poets of the royal court, Kambar took only a benefactor called Sadaiappa *Va͟l͟lal* as his patron. This shows what an independent spirit he had.

Two 'Kutty's

Not only poets of the likes of the world famous Kambar and *Kā͟lidhāsā*, but also several other poets had displayed courage in not fearing the kings. I have mentioned the two great kavis. Now let me talk about two people who are called Kutty Kavi and *Kutty Sāsthri*.

The real name of Kutty Kavi, the first one, is *Vānchyēswaran*. Since his ancestors belonged to a place called Sri *Vānchiya Kshēthra*, they named him after the deity of that *kshēthra*. Since he had attained the ability to compose *kavithā* even as a child, he acquired the nick name of 'Kutty Kav*i'* (Kutty in Tamil means 'small').

King Shāhaji

At the end of the seventeenth century, the kingdom of Thanjavur changed hands from the Naikkars to Maharattās who belonged to the lineage of *Śivāji*. *Shāhaji* is one of the first few kings in that line. He was an expert in many arts. He patronized the scholars very well. Being a great *Śiva bhaktha*, he had composed twenty four *ashtapadhis* (a type of musical composition) on Lord *Thyāgarāja* of Thiruvarur, just as Jayadheva did on Lord *Krishṇā*. He had desired to establish a whole town that was consisted of great *pandithas* (scholars). He selected a place called Thiruvisainallur on the southern banks of Cauvery - the one that is referred to as Thiruviyalur in *Thēvāram* - and established a large *sarvamānya agrahāram* there. He invited great scholars all the way from Kurjaram (what is now called Gujarath), Maharashtra, Andhra, Karnataka, as well as our Dhravida *Dhēśa* and requested them to settle down there. For each one of them, he gifted land and house. One such settler was the father of Kutty Kavi who came from Sri *Vānchiyam*, near Nannilam.

I started talking about kavis who were not bothered about even kings. Now let me tell you how Kutty Kavi garlanded King *Shāhaji* with garlands of fame and garlands of poems right from his childhood.

Poem Glorifying the King

The kavis used to compose poems praising the kings, motivated by the following thought. - 'When the kings had refined taste and generosity as well, the kavis could encourage them through these praises and make them patronize the kavis even more. Due to their own such encouragement received from these kings through their patronage, these kavis could produce even more fine *kāvyās.*' - These praises of the kings would of course be very highly exaggerated. This type of exaggeration has been accepted as part of literary finery and is referred to as '*adhiśayōkthi*', etc. These kinds of poems are called *Chātu kavithās.*

Since the best way to cheer a king is to praise his wife even more than praising himself, they used to compose poems in praise of the queens too.

There is something that comes to my mind now.

Appayya Dikshithar's grandfather is called Achchan *Dīkshithar.* '*Āchāryā Dīkshithar*' got corrupted into 'Achchan

Dīkshithar’. He is also called *Vakshasthalāchāryār*. The reason for this very name is that he had composed a poem in praise of the queen of Emperor *Krishńa dhēvarāya.*

Once, *Krishńadhēvarāya* had come to Kanchipuram to have *Varadharāja Perumāḻ’s dharśan.* The erudite scholar, Achchan *Dīkshithar*, who was a member of the king’s court, had also accompanied him.

When the priest was performing *‘ārathi’* (a ritual dedication of camphor flame shown around the deity), as he raised the lamp high up and slowly brought it down, it appeared to Rayar that *Perumāḻ’s* eyes were looking down as if He was checking something below. This was perhaps due to the visual effects of the shadows cast by the lamp on His face. The king recounted his observation to Achchan *Dīkshithar* and asked him, *‘Dīkshitharvāḻ!* Can you think of any reason, or *aithihyam* (legendary significance), for this?’

As soon as Rayar asked this, *Dīkshithar* came out with his reply in a flash, in the form of a *slōkā*. He recited this *slōkā*, which means, ‘Oh, that! *Perumāḻ’s* gaze fell on the queen standing next to you and glowing with the brilliance of gold. *Perumāḻ* thought that she was none other than *Mahālakshmi*. He was wondering, ‘Does it mean that *Mahālakshmi* has actually dismounted and left my vakshasthala (chest)?’ To clear this doubt, He lowered His gaze and checked on His chest.’

‘kānchith kānchana gaurāngim vīkshya sākshādhiva śriyam |
varadha: samśayāpannō vakshasthalam avēkshathē ||’

Since he concluded the *slōkā* with the phrase ‘looking at his vakshasthala’, Rayar presented him with the title of ‘Vakshasthala’. Since then, he became known as *‘Vakshasthalāchāryā’*, appending his own name of *Āchāryā* in the end.

Among similar such praises that *Kālidhāsā* had heaped on *Bhōjā* using his great imagination, there is one that is quite witty:

They say that *Krishna Paramāthmā*, who in his childhood grew up in *Gōkula* on *Bhūlōka* (Earth), has been residing in a place called *Gōlōka* in the universal space after the conclusion of His *avathara*.

One day, Naradha saw Him leaving the divine world and going to *Bhūlōka* again.

He asked Him, 'Gōpala! Leaving your world, where and why are you going?'

Bhagawan replied, '*Dhēvarshi*! It's nothing great. The very Kamadhenu, the chief cow here, has become dry without any milk to nurse even her own calf. The reason for this plight of *Kamadhēnu*, who is capable of giving anything that anyone requested, is that she came to know about *Bhōjā* of *Bhūlōka*, who showers his rewards on kavis even without being requested. Feeling out done and brooding over it, she became skinny and devoid of milk. Therefore, I am going to this *Bhōjā*'s world to pluck some grass for her calf.'

Narada responded to that, saying, 'Oh, how unfortunate! You mission is not going to be feasible! Because, so many rivals of *Bhōjā* who were defeated by him with respect to some aspect such as valor, generosity, looks, education, etc., fell on the ground in frustration that no grass grows there!'

Kālidhāsā, who praised the same *Bhōjā* at a time when praising was warranted, left him altogether when he insisted on a Kavi.

Kambar also praised *Kulōththungā* when such praising was warranted.

They had done the condemning or praising, while taking only a particular action into consideration; they were not really influenced by any base, vengeful hatred or request for favor.

While praising, the kavis have showered words of praise on their patrons in a much more generous measure than the material generosity that these patrons showed towards themselves.

In the description of Sri Rāmā's coronation, Kambar has sung that *Vaśishtā* received the crown only from the hands of an ancestor of Kambar's patron, *Thiruveṇṇai Nallur Sadaiappa Vaḻḻal*, and then placed the crown on Rāmā!

King and the Child: Mutual Admiration

Once *Shāhaji* had gone to Madurai to have a *dharśan* of *Mīnākshi Amman.* Since he took his retinue of *vidhvāns* along, the father of Kutty Kavi as well as Kutty Kavi himself had the good fortune of obtaining *Mīnambika's dharśan.*

The moment that *Shāhaji* had the *dharśan* of *Ambāḻ*, a *slōkā* issued out of his mouth extempore. It was a *slōkā* with quite a play on words!

'purimadhuram girimadhuram garimadhurandhara -
nithamba - parātyam |
sthūla kucham nīla kacham bhālaka
chandhrāngitham bhaje theja: ||'

This is the *slōkā.*

To make it rhyme with the first two '*madhuram*', I said '*karimadhurandhara*', which should really be split as '*karima - dhurandhara*'.

Even the name of *Ambāḻ's* abode is sweet - *madhuram* - Madhurāpuri - '*puri madhuram*'.

Ambāḻ's speech - or you can interpret it as Her name - is also sweet - '*giri madhuram*'.

Then it describes her sweet form, including '*nīla kacham*' or the dark hair, and the crescent moon that She is wearing in it ('*bhālaka chandhrangitham*'), ending it with a declaration that such a *thejas* (brilliance) is *Ambāḻ*.

The child-kavi drank this blissful flood of the taste of *kavithā* to his ear's content. Next instant, he also became an *āśu* kavi (extempore composer) and sang in praise of the king. He performed even more word plays than what the king did.

> *'kavilōkē navilōkē bhuvi lōkēśasya sāhajē rūpamām |*
> *hrudhitharasā (a)vidhitharasā -*
> *thadhidhara sāhithya-vā-na-mē-lagathi ||'*

The meaning of the first half is, 'I haven't seen anyone in all the community of poets in this world who could be compared to *Shāhaji* (says *Sāhaji* in the *slōkā*), who rules the world.' The '*navilōkē*' that comes after the '*kavilōkē*' splits as '*na vilōkē*' ('not seen'). '*Bhuvi - lōkēśasya*' also contains a '*vilōkē*'.

The first word in the second part splits as '*hruthi - tharasa*'. The next one is not '(a) *vidhi-tharasa*'. It should be split as '(a) *vidhitha-rasa*'. '*Thath-idhara-sāhithya*' also has a '*tharasa*' sitting in it!

First half has three '*vilōkē*' and the second part has three '*tharasa*'.

In this second line, the child-kavi says, 'Since such taste (*rasa*) cannot be found in any other words of composition except this king's words of *kavithā*, none of those words instantly come and stick on to the heart like these words.'

While giving the certificate to the king, he is giving a certificate to himself - that is, that he has a great knowledge for the *kavithā rasa*! He is saying that he is seeing the *rasa* in *Shāhaji*'s *kavithā* that he is not able to see in anyone else's *kavithā*. He is implying that only *Shāhaji*'s words stick to his heart in an instant. '*Tharasa*' means 'instantly'. 'Lagathi' means 'to stick'.

If one needs courage to speak defiantly to a king, a child needs even more courage to give him a certificate. When the king composed the *kavithā* in *Ambāḻ's* presence, losing all sense of himself, the other great *vidhvāns* were simply listening to it with humility. At that juncture, if this child spontaneously composed a *slōkā* applauding him, that also shows that the position of the child is even higher than that of the king.

They say that it was at this juncture that the king conferred the title of Kutty Kavi to *Vanchyēswara*.

The same Kutty Kavi who applauded the king when he composed a great *kavithā*, didn't get tired of launching a tirade against him when he erred. However, the one who committed such an error was not King *Shāhaji*.

Prathāpa Simha and Kutty Kavi

After *Shāhaji*, his son *Prathāpa* Simha became the king. Nanāji Prabhu, Chandhra Bhānu, and Anandha Rāyar, the elders who, as the chief officials, were very skillfully executing the royal administration, passed away in course of time. Unfortunately, Prathāpa Simha got into the hold of a few uneducated sycophants. He kept them as his advisors. As a result, the kingdom got into disarray and the people suffered in so many ways. There was no support for *vidhvāns* and kavis who had proper education either.

This was the time when Kutty Kavi ventured to compose a *kāvya* to chide the king boldly. At that time he was not just a '*kutty*' (tiny), but a full-grown adult. He didn't write simply pouring out his frustrations. He intended to inject some sense into *Prathāpa* Simha through his writing and set him off in the right path. As far as *Prathāpa* Simha was concerned, he was a good person by himself. His only problem was that he was easily influenced, and he fell into the trap of some bad company and became a yes-man for them, causing suffering to his subjects.

Kutty Kavi was wondering how to correct him and then decided to write a *kāvya* as a satire, pointing out his flaws with a sense of humor. Such a *kāvya* is called '*slōkthi*'. He used the method of saying something outwardly with another implied meaning inside. This form is called '*anyāpadhēśam*'. They draw cartoons these days. They even depict humans in the forms of animals as a caricature. Kutty Kavi drew a cartoon simply with his words!

Buffalo Hymn

That composition is still available. It is called '*mahishā śathakam*', containing one hundred *slōkās*. You understand that it is a composition that contains a hundred *slōkās*, eulogizing a buffalo, don't you? The title itself is satirical.

A queen is called a '*mahishi*'. We even say '*patta mahishi*' to denote the main queen who sits on the throne with the king. But a king is not called '*mahishā*'. Since '*mahi*' means earth, he only has names such as '*mahīśa*' or '*mahīpathi*'.

Kutty Kavi started composing the *śathaka*. We don't know whether he intended to do simply a *śathaka* (hundred) or a sahasri, creating one thousand *slōkās*. As and when he finished a few *slōkās*, he sent them to the king.

In a nutshell, its message is that instead of making a living, serving a king who plays yes-man to a bunch of unbecoming advisors in his *sabha*, it is far better to procure a buffalo and use it to plough the fields and live out of its yields. He composed his *slōkās* paying homage to this buffalo that is yoked to the plough in order to cultivate the field.

Let me mention the message conveyed by just two of these *slōkās.*

One of them says, 'The great scholar Srīdhara is trading his expertise for money. Ambu *Dīkshithar*, who has learned shat-*dharsana*, is having great difficulty finding a meal. What, shat-*dharsana*? Ugh! Even the renowned Kutty Kavi camped in front of an evil, wealthy man, and finally fell down asleep, tired of waiting. What is the reason for all this? - Only the result of not worshipping you, Mahishēswara (the buffalo-god).'

In the other one, he says, 'Hey, buffalo! Why are you toiling day and night, ploughing the land? You can simply join the ones who are currently in the king's *sabha* and earn a comfortable living. Don't bother thinking, 'But I am not intelligent! I am not talented!' Compared to the current *sabha* members, you must be called Bruhaspathi!'

The king, who read the *slōkās* as the kavi kept sending them, realized his mistake since these *slōkās* were really piercing through his mind. I did tell you that he was basically a good-natured man, didn't I?

Poet Who Saved the Nation

Setting aside his royal status, *Prathāpa* Simha went to Kutty Kavi and told him that wisdom has dawned on him and he promised the kavi that he would dismiss the incompetent and selfish bunch and would appoint knowledgeable and able advisors and rule the country with their advice.

Kutty Kavi was happy that the mission that he undertook for helping the country was successful.

With that, he put a full stop to the satirical *kāvya* that he was composing. Since he had completed exactly one hundred *slōkās* at that point, he called it *'mahishā sathakam'* and wrapped it up.

You might ask, 'Since the king corrected himself, why did the kavi not destroy these *slōkās*?' He didn't tear them up because, he thought that this *kāvya* would serve as proof that even a king could be controlled and brought over to good ways by a kavi, and a kavi truly possesses more power than even a ruler who controls an entire country. He also thought that it could serve as a warning and a lesson to the future rulers.

I must point out that the king didn't confiscate those writings or prohibit its usage either.

Thus, the courage of a kavi had benefited an entire nation!

The Youth Who Conquered the Bengali Scholar

A great-grandson of Kutty Kavi was also named *Vanchyēswara*r. This great-grandson was called *Vanchyēswara* Yajva. Since he performed a *Sōma Yagā*, the '*Yajva*' was added to his name. Just as his great-grandfather, he was also very erudite and a talented composer. For our purpose here, the most important fact is that he was also very bold just like his great-granfather. Since he was another exact image of his great-grandfather, people started referring to him as Kutty *Sāsthriy*ar in general.

He didn't exhibit his boldness to a king first; it was towards another scholar. He was only eighteen at that time.

Once, a *vidhvan* from a place called 'Nadia' or *Navadhvīp* in Bengal, who was an expert on a modern system of logic, specially developed in that region, came to Thiruvidaimaruthur and debated in front of King Amara Simha. No one in Thanjavur could equal him, and the court was stunned and humiliated. At that time, the young *Kutty Sāsthri* mumbled some response. Since he was so young, the Bengali scholar signaled him to just sit down in a condescending manner. *Kutty Sāsthri's* sense of dignity was just heaving up. He began roaring out what he started off as a mumbling. He discussed all the sixty-four kinds of arguments that are mentioned in the great modern book of logic called '*kāthāthari*'. He had simply shut out the Bengali scholar who couldn't even mumble a response. His courage had the debut in such a saving act of the dignity of the entire body of scholars of Tamil Nadu.

Sāsthri Who Wouldn't Bow Down to *Serfōji*

Let me now come to the story of his boldness towards the king in order to save his dignity.

When he became older, King *Serfōji* was ruling the region from Thanjavur. King *Serfōji* used to send someone on a horse everyday to the nearby place called Orattha Nadu. This horseman would collect the manthrākshadā (holy grains of rice with turmeric) given by the brahmin settlers there, at the completion of their daily *puja* and *vaidhika* karma. The king would drop this *akshadha* collection on his head and then only take his meals. Kutty *Sāsthri* was one of those brahmins.

He would adhere to all the observances at length without any omissions. He wouldn't hurry up just because the king's horseman had arrived. With full attention, he would observe all the rituals taking whatever time it necessitated completely, and only then would he give the *akshadha*. Many days, this caused a delay in the king's eating schedule.

On one occasion, when *Serfōji* encountered *Sāsthri*, he spoke out and asked, '*Sāsthri*gale! Your observance seems to be performed very leisurely.'

Serfōji was a very respectable person. He has done yeoman service to the arts. Just the collections at Saraswathi Mahal are enough to affirm his great service. Nevertheless, the status felt by a king does come out at one time or another. That is what made him speak like that.

That was it! *Śāsthriyar* could not stand it. He was hurt and humiliated and thought, 'Just for the sake of a king, can a brahmin relax the *vedhic* and daivic karmas and their rules and regulations? Though I am considered outwardly as someone who sends the *akshadha* with blessings even to the king, inside, he seems to think of me only as a servant who performs this as a task for him.'

That very night, he vacated his house and left town with his wife. He came to straight to Thiruvaiyaru at midnight. He fell flat at the feet of *Ambāḻ* Dharmasamvardhini and cried and complained to Her that a potential damage to his *swadharma* occurred. The couple left immediately and reached Maharashtra without stopping anywhere.

Śāsthri Who Excelled in Friendship Too

Kutty *Śāsthri* went through a number of hurdles there and managed them, and then he became a *vidhvan* in the royal court of a Pēshwā called Bhāji Rao Srīmantha.

In Maharashtra, even the important ministers called the Peshwas had acquired the authority to rule like kings. 'Srīmantha' was their title.

The scholarly poets would associate and have close relationship with a king who was scholarly and a patron of arts just as they would also leave a king who acted inappropriately. We just saw how Kutty Kavi honored *Shāhaji* by composing an *āsu kavi*, didn't we?

Similary, Kutty *Śāsthri* also honored Srīmantha who was very knowledgeable and showed great affection towards him.

Just as he showed his boldness, he did something that was equally worthy of mentioning in terms of his love and loyalty.

It was a time when the British were gaining territories through battles and other devious means. *Srimantha* gathered other smaller level kings of Maharashtra and confronted the British invasion twice. In the end, in 1818, he happened to lose the war. With that, the dynasty of the Peshwas itself ended and the British rule was established.

After the defeat and the loss of the position of Pēshwa, they usurped even the title of 'Srīmantha' and had conferred on Bhaji Rao the title of 'Maharaj ', which was given to all the defeated *swadhēsī* kings as a hollow, good-for-nothing title. With a pretension of magnanimity, they gave a pension and sent him to a place called Bithur, which was far away in the north, near Kanpur. They decided with a connivance to make the imprisoning appear as though it was a placement in a huge bungalow. Since they realized that it would be troublesome if they had antagonized the general population, they opted not to kill the defeated, but removed them from their town and placed them in a bungalow. They have committed all sorts of eye-wash like this.

Kutty *Sāsthri* came to know that the British had arrested Srīmantha and were going to take him to some place near Kanpur and shut him in a bungalow like a prisoner.

He ran immediately. The British officials were just getting ready to leave with Bhaji Rao. He told Rao, 'I was living with you when you were prosperous. I wouldn't leave you in your times of difficulty. I will also come with you to Kanpur'

Though Bhaji Rao tried so hard to stop him, he would not listen.

Kutty *Sāsthri* went along with them. All along the way, he was begging for food, and traveled a long distance.

He chose to stay on the banks of Ganga where they had kept Bhaji Rao. So much of love, loyalty, and gratitude he had!

After one year, he came to *Kāsī*.

At that time, *Serfōji* had also come to *Kāśi* for collecting many rare palm leaf manuscripts for Saraswathi Mahal. When he saw Kutty *Śāsthri* there, he showed a lot of remorse for saying some hurtful things due to the influence of a bad time and requested him to return to Thanjavur. Bhaji Rao also felt bad that *Śāsthri* was suffering by associating with himself and insisted that *Śāsthri* should return home. In the end, *Śāsthri* agreed. Before returning home, he learned and practiced *vēdhāntha śāsthra* under a great scholar called *Ahōbila Pandithar* who was then residing at *Kāśi*.

Then he set out for his hometown. He came via Maharashtra to call on his old friends. Then, when he touched Karnataka on the way to Tamil Nadu, the then Maharaja of Mysore, called *Krishṅā* Raja *Udaiyār* pleaded with *Śāsthri* to stay in his court and adorn it. The king lovingly insisted and stopped *Śāsthri* right there.

Since then, the king of Mysore gave a lot of *sambhavana* (respectful gift) to *Śāsthri*.

Even so, *Śāsthri* had established his independent stand even with this king one time.

Turning Down the King of Mysore

It was during his stay in Mysore that Kutty *Śāsthri* performed the *Sōma Yaga* and became a Yajva. When *Udaiyār* came to know that, he requested *Śāsthri*, 'It says that the king himself has to hold the umbrella for the one who performs the *Vājapēya*. You must perform a *Vājapēya* so that I can receive that good fortune.'

But Kutty *Śāsthri* refused, and said, 'In the state that we are in right now, caught under the grip of these foreigners, it is very difficult to perform *yagas* in a strictly appropriate manner. I performed this one *yaga* in order to rectify the wrongs that I might have committed to the *brāhmaṅa* dharma. All through it, I was feeling so worried as though I was holding a bundle of cinder in my stomach. I am afraid to venture into performing a *Vājapēya* and commit some wrong again. I hope you understand it.' He respectfully declined with determination.

He wasn't intimidated to feel bound by the king's words. The honor of having the king himself holding the umbrella for him while he proceeds for the *avabrutha snana* (ritual bath) didn't tempt him in the least.

'Our Relative'

Kutty *Śāsthri* is like a relative to all of us. Because, his father Narasimha *Śāsthri* and his grandfather *Madhava Śāsthri* have all been *vidhvāns* in our Sri Matam. The one who turned down the opportunity of a king holding the umbrella for him, has in fact sent several decorative umbrellas to our *matam* as his contribution.

You just heard the stories of two kavis who had the title of 'Kutty' as well as two who earned the title of 'Maha'. They all belong to the kavis who had possessed the great qualities of independence, self-respect, taking care of the self-respect of the others, protecting the welfare of the others, love, etc. There are many others like them. As *Thyāgarāja Swāmigal* said, *'andhariki vandhanamu'* (Telugu) ('we salute all of them')

BOASTING OF POETS AND INTELLECTUALS

Beauty in That Too!

If you do not watch out even slightly, self-respect can turn into self-glorification. At those times, people tend to speak to others even with arrogance and ego. That is, they might hurt the self-respect of others. Even noble kavis and learned people have behaved like this under some circumstances. There are such stories even about *Kālidhāsā* and Kambar. I am narrating them since they also have some interesting aspects.

We shouldn't take these matters too deeply and make judgements on them. If their great qualities and virtues are like a huge reservoir that is stagnant, these aspects should be considered as the waves that rise up occasionally on the surface and then subside. Such occasional waves do add some beauty to the reservoir. If such waves of self-glory rise up in us, that would be akin to the waves on the surface of a jug full or tumbler full of water, and will yield untoward results.

Several kavis and intellectuals have been conscious of their intelligence. There are several tidbits about their treatment of other kavis, scholars, or even their own patrons in a tone of disregard during conversations or in their compositions.

In general, it is indeed wrong to have a sense of competition and jealousy - actually, very wrong. Yet, sometimes when knowledge has to grow, this helps as well. They say *'spardhayā vardhathē vidhyā'*. If a participant in a running race stayed behind thinking that competition is wrong, how would that be? If a student wanted to let others score higher ranks and did not compete, is that right?

It is great if there is competition without jealousy. That is actually good. However, in the case of the kavis, even this jealousy, as long as it doesn't exceed the limits, gives a contrast to their character and enhances it. When it does exceed the limits, they do get a knock on the head, learn their lesson, and have been humbled.

Whom did *Kālidhāsā* speak to with impertinence? æ Not his own contemporary kavis or kings. Going even above them, he spoke like that to none other than *Ambāḷ, Parāsakthi*!

It was Her *ucchishta thambulam* (betal juice from her mouth) that gave him the power to compose in the first place! He called himself 'Kali-dhasa 'to mean that he was Her slave. *Syāmaḻā Dhandakam,* which is what everyone learns and recites as *Ambāḻ sthothra*, came out of his very mouth.

Yet, what happened?

Seeking Divine Justice

If the competition between the kavis intensified a lot and no one's superiority could be determined through debates, the king would usually leave the verdict up to God. He would take all the kavis and *vidhvāns* to the temple. There, they would determine it through one of several means as follows. - They would pick a flower to see the outcome. Or, they would place the bundle of palm leaves on balance scales. Looking at it the normal way, only the side that has the higher number of leaves would be heavier. Yet, in the presence of God, when everyone takes refuge in God with total belief, and measure it without arguing in an atheistic spirit and without making fun, even the side with the lighter bundle might go down if that was of higher quality. When the small bundle of Thirukkural was placed on the plank of Sangam all other poets of the Sangam fell into the '*Potramarai'* (tank in which lotus blooms) tank, didn't they? It is just like that. Or, just as in the story of Jnana Sambandhar, they might even conduct '*anal vādham*' (fire test) or '*punal vādham*' (water test) to leave the verdict to *daivi sakthi*. Or, they would all go to the *sannidhi* (divine presence) and simply stay silent and meditate. The priest might be possessed with the *sakthi* and reveal the divine opinion, or an *asariri* (oracle) might be heard.

Kāḻidhāsā and Ambikā

Once, it was not possible to determine who among *Kāḻidhāsā*, *Bhavabhūthi*, and Dhandi was the best. The usual format of debate couldn't help determine their ranks. Therefore, *Bhōjā* took everyone to *Ambāḻ's sannidhana*.

Ambāḻ gave Her verdict through an *asariri.*

'kavir - dhandī kavir - dhandī
Bhavabhūthisthu panditha:

She said this to mean, 'Dhandi must be called a kavi. Repeating it twice, She confirmed it without a doubt. *Bhavabhūthi* must be called a panditha'

Higher *pāndithyam* (erudition) denotes knowledge of many things, and a thorough knowledge of the language grammar. But grammar is very different from composition. A kavi doesn't have to be knowledgeable in many things, nor does he have to be thoroughly knowledgeable in grammar. In the heart, or whatever other medium, absorbing the essence of even trivial matters and experiencing that essence, a kavi says it in sweet, delicate words in such a way that it will enter other people's heart also. It is great if *pāndithyam* (erudition) and kavithvam (skill of composition) are in equal proportion. However, we see that these are in varying proportion among the kavis. Only a few could be called poetic and a few others should be called scholarly.

In this manner, *Ambāḻ* gave a very succinct verdict, indicating that Dhandi had more *kavithā rasa* than *pandithya*, and *Bhavabhūthi* had the weight of intelligence higher than the *kavithā rasa*. There was no mention of *Kāḻidhāsā* in this.

He was overcome with anger, thinking, 'So, has She disposed me off as neither a kavi nor an intellectual?'

It was then that *Kāḻidhāsā* spoke to Her in a manner that makes us feel taken aback. He did this to the one who is the root of all speech as well as the thought that gives the power to compose *kavithā*

He asked Her as if scolding in anger, 'Then who am I, hey, you ...?' *'kō (a)ham...;'*

He was hasty! *Ambāḻ's* judgement wasn't over with the mention of Dhandi and *Bhavabhūthi*. She was about to say her verdict about *Kāḻidhāsā* also. But after saying that one is a kavi and the other is an intellectual, *Kāḻidhāsā* thought that there was nothing left to say, and he spoke too soon. He spoke to the Paradevatha in a disrespectful manner.

She didn't get angry on account of that.

Say, we don't pay attention to our child. We were so busy that we didn't lend our ears to listen to whatever it was trying to tell us. So it gets upset and goes and sits with a long face. We couldn't pay attention only because we were busy making a snack for it on the stove. When we are finished making the snack, we take some of it and offer it to the upset child. It just rejects it, saying, 'Go away, I don't want it' and throws it back on our face. Do we really get angry with it? We just feel like bending down, saying, 'Little prince! You have so much ego? Go ahead and spank this mother for not paying attention to you!'

Ambāḻ didn't get angry with her child *Kāḻidhāsā* at all; She was only proud of him.

As an answer to his question of 'Who am I, hey, you...?', She said,

'thvamēvāham, thvamēvāham,
thvamēvahām na samśaya:'

'You are Myself really, You are Myself really, You are Myself really. There is no doubt about it' said She three times, leaving no doubt about it.

'You are Myself really', or we should actually say, 'You are really Myself'. (*thvam ēva* - you are really; *aham* - Myself)

Had he not interrupted so vehemently, we don't know what She would have said. After saying one kavi was a true kavi, and another kavi was an intellectual, She might have said that he (*Kāḻidhāsā*) was a '*panditha* kav*i*', a total mixture of both or something like that as a tribute and stopped with that. For the very reason that he interrupted, She raised him to the pinnacle, calling him as Herself!

She is the *jnana* that encompasses all the knowledge of the *pandithas*. Her *sahasranama* says that She is *jnānathā*, *jnanavigrahā* (one who provides *jnana*, one who is the form of *jnāna*). She is also the root of the *kavithā rasa*. In Thaithriyam, the *rasa* that is said to be the principle of *Paramāthmā* is indeed Herself. *Sahasranāmam* says that She is *rasajna, rasasēvathi* : that is, one who is a *rasika* (one who has an appreciation for fine things) who knows *rasa*, and the storehouse of *rasa*. She said that for such an equal mixture of both, *Kāḻidhāsā* is the only equal to Herself.

Ambāḻ, at another situation, did humble *Kāḻidhāsā*, thinking, 'Because I praised him like this, instead of just feeling self-glory rarely, what if he develops cockiness? I shouldn't let him do that.'

At this time, the competition was only between *Bhavabhūthi* and *Kāḻidhāsā*. This time, it was decided to use the scale, placing each one's *kavithā* on each side of the scale, and measure it in *Ambāḻ's* temple. *Bhōjā* had asked them to compose a *kavithā* with regard to something. Neither him nor his *sabha* were able to determine whose *kavithā* was higher valued, and therefore it was brought to *Ambāḻ's* judgement. *Bhōjā* himself wrote both their *kavithās* on leaves that were same in number. He placed both of these on the opposite sides of the scale.

When *Ambāḻ* was viewing them with total fairness, looking only at their quality, *Bhavabhūthi's* side started to go up and *Kāḻidhāsā*'s side started to go down. So *Kāḻidhāsā* was about to win.

At once, *Ambāl̲* thought that an absolutely fair judgement might lead the kavis to go astray. She thought, 'If *Kāl̲idhāsā* wins again, he might get spoilt with too much of head weight. Similarly, a very talented *Bhavabhūthi*, after being slighted earlier with a subtly lower evaluation of a *panditha*, will have a broken heart now if he loses directly to *Kāl̲idhāsā* and might get affected. Both children shouldn't be allowed to become like that.' Her thinking was only for a moment, or probably even less than that. Since She is *Ambāl̲*, within that time, She also thought of a way to handle it.

Paradevatha, who provides the beauty to beauty itself, is fully decked up. Not only does she have a flower on top of Her braids, but she also has a flower tucked on top of the ear. Lalitha *Sahasranamam* describes it like this. - First it says that She is wearing *champaka*, *as̄ōka*, *punnaga*, and *sowgandhika* on her hair. *champakās̄ōka* - punnaga - sowgandhika - lasath - kas̄ā. Then in a way to steal the mind, she is wearing a bunch of *kadhamba* flowers on her ears. 'kadhamba - manjarī - kluptha - karñapūra - *manohara*.

When our story was happening, She was wearing *kalhāram* (lily) flower on her ear.

When *Bhavabhūthi*'s side started going up, as if to set right the flower on the ear, She pressed it slightly. While doing that, She cleverly let a drop of nectar fall down straight on *Bhavabhūthi*'s leaves!

When we say *Kavithā* '*rasa*', we think only of the nectar. The moment the drop of nectar from the sweetness personified *Ambāl̲'s* ear flower fell, the *rasa* that was slightly lacking in *Bhavabhūthi's kavithā* was made up. Suddenly, his side went down and *Kāl̲idhāsā*'s side went up. The kavis themselves attained the exactly opposite status: *Bhavabhūthi*'s status went up and *Kāl̲idhāsā*'s went down.

But immediately, *Kāḻidhāsā* understood *Ambāḻ's* trick. How did he understand it? Didn't She say, 'You are really Myself?' Her words will never become false. So he understood it by being Herself.

Immediately, he sang it as an *āsu kavithā*.

But did he sing charging her in haste like the earlier occasion? - No. Even if he had chided Her for lowering the value of his *kavithā*, which was really superior, we can't blame him. But now he not only did not chide Her, but he also didn't get angry. He started with *'ahō mē sowbhāgyam'* ('Aha, what a great fortune for me!') and sang the way in which Her nectar gave weight to *Bhavabhūthi*'s *kavithā*.

Because of the dawn of wisdom (that was also Her *kripa*), he changed his mind and sang like this. She, who had said, 'You and I are the same' earlier, acted in an unfair manner. Why? He understood that She gave more weight to *Bhavabhūthi*'s composition in order to reduce his own ahankāra (ego), which was rearing its head instead of considering himself as not separate from Her. Therefore, he considered it as his good fortune.

On hearing that, *Bhavabhūthi* thought, 'Oh, is that right?' and prostrated to *Kāḻidhāsā*. *Kāḻidhāsā* then asked *Bhōjā* to give one hundred elephants to *Bhavabhūthi* as his *sambhāvanā*.

We feel pleased to learn that the two *Mahā kavis* who were just jealous and competitive became amiable.

After that, *Kāḻidhāsā* developed a lot of humility. It is apparent when you see the *slōkās* that he had composed showing humility. For example, he says at the beginning of Raghuvamsa that his undertaking to attempt such a *kāvya* is akin to using a small boat to attempt to cross an ocean that cannot be crossed. He then says in all humility that his attempt to undertake the task that is achievable only by exalted kavis such as *Vāḻmīki*, who had written the story of the star of Raghuvamsa, is analogous to a dwarf stretching his hands in an attempt to pluck a fruit that is reachable only to a very tall person.

Nīlakantar and Mahādhēvar

Nilakanta *Dīkshithar* was a great man in so many ways. If you consider his lineage, He was the grandson of the brother of Appaiyya *Dīkshithar*, who was an aspect of *Paramēśwarā*. He was great in learning and observance of karma, was a great *vidhvan* and a great *bhaktha*. He also held an important post. He was a minister for Thirumalai Naikkar and was considered Naikkar's right hand man. This is the same Naikkar who had built the *mahal* and a new *mandapa* in *Mīnākshi temple.* He was also endowed with several of noble qualities. Even such a great man seemed to have developed superiority complex.

During *Dīkshithar's* time - that is, the later part of the sixteenth century and the earlier part of the seventeenth century - there was a great scholar called *Mahādhēva Sāsthri* in a village called Pazhamarneri in Thanjavur district. Though not lacking in erudition, he was not as renowned as *Dīkshithar* among the general public. However, other scholars were aware of his greatness.

The temple of Airāvathēśwarar is located near Pazhamarneri. The consecrated deity of *Ambāḻ* in that temple is called *Alankārēśwari. Mahādhēva Sāsthri* was worshipping this *Ambāḻ* with great *bhakthi.* He was deeply immersed in the practice of worshipping and in course of time, he began receiving instructions from *Alankārēśwari.*

He longed for a male offspring. When he was praying for this, he received instruction to go to Madurai and offer prayers to *Mīnākshi* Amman, who is there with the complete *chaithanya* of *Parāśakthi.*

He went to Madurai accordingly. Upon seeing *Mīnāmbika*, he was deeply engrossed in Her and started worshipping Her.

Dīkshithar had already heard about him. He now learnt that *Sāsthri* had come to Madurai and wanted to meet him. But …

Even great elders are affected by their position and status at times. So he wanted to meet *Śāsthri* without compromising with his status as the minister. He was waiting for a request from *Mahādhēva Śāsthri* himself for an audience with him. However, after receiving the *dharśan* of *Mīnākshi*, *Mahādhēva Śāsthri* had no other thoughts except Her worship. He had no desire to meet any one.

The omniscient *Ambāḻ* willed for the meeting of these two of Her children. She wanted to make *Dīkshithar* realize that erudition must be accompanied by humility. That is what is becoming of a learned person. Through *Dīkshithar*'s experiences, She wanted the whole world to realize this and began to set a series of events in motion accordingly.

One day, *Dīkshithar* was proceeding along a street in a palanquin with due pomp and protocol of a minister.

At that time, *Mahādhēva Śāsthri* was coming along that way, returning to his residence after the *dharśan* of *Ambāḻ*, engrossed in his meditation on Her lotus feet. He did not notice the palanquin.

While everyone on the street was paying due respects to the minister, *Dīkshithar* noticed a *brahmin* just passing through unconcerned, looking somewhat a fool. He misconstrued this, thinking, 'He has this much ahankāra while appearing to be a fool?'

With a tone of authority, he asked the people in his retinue, 'Who is this character with a drooping ear intruding into our procession? Give him the '*ardha chandhra*' treatment and send him off'

Since he was a great scholar with the knowledge of nuances of the language, even while giving orders in anger, he used refined and subtle expressions and said, '*ardha chandhra ubhachāram*'. '*ardha chandhra*' treatment is nothing but expelling someone out pushing his neck. When pushing at the neck, the person who does the pushing would have his hand shaped as a semicircle like '*ardha chandhra*' (half moon), right? Hence this expression.

'āyāntha-madhvan-yathi-dhīrga-
karñam budham Mahādhēva sunāmadhēyam |
vilōkya manthrī maki sārva bhauma:
srīnīlakanta: sibikādhirūdha: ||

nishkāsayainam thvathi-dhīrga-karñam
krithvārdha chandhram dhrithamithuvācha |
sāsthrī thadhākarñya jarith-yuvācha tham
dhīkshitham jnana lavādya mūdam ||'

'*athvani*' - on the way; '*athi dhīrga karñam*' - with a long, drooping ear; '*āyāntham*' - coming; *budham* - intellectual; '*Mahādhēva sunāmadhēyam*' - person with the nice name of *Mahādhēva Śāsthri*; '*maki sārva bhauma*:' - *Dīkshithar*; '*manthrī*' - the minister; '*sibikāthirudha*:' - the one who was sitting on the palanquin; '*srī nīlakanta*' - *Sri Nilakanta Dīkshithar*; '*vilōkya*' - looking at; '*athi dhīrga karñam*' - long-eared; '*ēnam*' -him; '*dhritham*' - immediately; '*krithva ardha chandhram*' - offering '*ardha chandhra* courtesy'; '*nishkāsya*' - chase away; '*ithyuvācha*' - said like that.

I have narrated the story told by only the first three lines of this *slōkā*.

The fourth line says that upon hearing these words of *Dīkshithar*, *Śāsthri* gave an immediate reply in a flash. He gave a hot reply, saying that *Dīkshithar*, who had earned the names of ‘*maki sārva bhauma*’ and ‘*manthri*’ was really an ignorant person who was all puffed up with just a tiny bit of knowledge.

‘*thath*’ - that (what Dikshithar had said); ‘*ākarnīya*’ - having heard; ‘*Śāsthri*’ - *Mahādhēva Śāsthri*; ‘*jnana lavadya mūdam*’ - the ignorant man who was puffed by a tiny bit of knowledge; ‘*tham dhikshitham*’ - to that *Dīkshithar*; ‘*jarithyuvācha*’ - replied in a flash.

What reply?

Mahādhēva Śāsthri thought, ‘What would someone who orders the expulsion of a harmless person, walking along the street, minding his own business of contemplating Dēvi, be like? Judging by his pomp, he appears to be someone holding a big position. From his expression of ‘*ardha chandhra ubhachāram*’, he also appears to be learned. But then, if it were real learning, would he have such vanity and arrogance? This Pāndya country must be deprived of good scholars. That is why this half-baked person is able to shine this much and order people around.’ He wanted to express this thought in a subtle, poetic manner, and at the same time, humble *Dīkshithar*, teaching him a lesson. Therefore, he shot the answer in the form of a *slōkā*.

Sāsthri simply said, ‘The sun has set. The moon hasn’t risen yet. Only a few stars are blinking here and there at this time. When it is so dark like this, it is no surprise that the light bugs are showing off their brilliance pompously.’

‘sūryē pranashtē - śasinihyadhrishtē
thārāsu mandha-dhyuthishu prakāśam |
mahāndhakārē (a)thivīrājithē hi
khadhyōdhakōpyalpa-ruchir-na chithram ||’

‘*sūryē pranashtē*’ - after sun set; ‘*śasini hi adhrishtē*’ - moon still out of sight; ‘*thārāsu*’ - the stars; ‘*mandha dhyuthishu* *prakasam*' - dull; '*mahāndhakārē*' - in the heavy darkness; '*khadhyōdhaka api*' - even the light bug ('*kha*' - sky, '*dhyōdhakam*' - possessed with light. Since the light bug flies in the sky, emitting its light, it acquired this name.) '*alpa ruchi*:' - with its meager brightness; '*virājathē*' - showing it off as very bright; '*na chithram*' - there is no surprise in this.

This subtle indication was quite sufficient for *Dīkshithar*. They say a good bull only needs one burn. *Dīkshithar*, who had possessed many virtues, immediately meditated upon *Ambāḻ* and understood everything. He realized, 'The same *maha panditha* that I wanted to meet all along is the very same one that I spoke of so contemptuously as drooping-eared; the same *Alankārēśwari* that he worships has sent him to *Mīnākshi*, my *ishta dēvathā* (favorite deity).'

The truly great will also be great in admitting their wrong whole-heartedly. Immediately, *Dīkshithar* jumped out of the palanquin, went straight to *Mahādhēva Śāsthri*, and paid him great respect according to strict *Śāsthric* injunctions. Then he said, 'Haven't you come to have the *dharśan* of *Mīnākshi* as per the instruction of *Alankārēśwari*?'

This very question revealed *Dīkshithar*'s nobility towards *Sāsthri*.

Both the wise children of *Ambāḻ* got together with each other in friendship as per Her will!

'niśamya thath-dhushta-manā makī cha thasmai
saparyām vidhivath chakāra |
bhavān alankāryapi-sōdhitha: san
mīnāmbikām śevithum ājagāma || '

'*makīcha*' - *Dīkshithar* too; '*thath*' - that (the hot reply that *Sāsthri* gave); '*niśamya*' - having heard; '*thushta manā*:' - with pleasant mind ...

We probably would be fuming, 'What, some ordinary man called me a pompous light bug, when I am the minister and a *vidhvan*?' The lofty mind of *Dīkshithar* only felt pleased because he was taught such a lesson by *Šāsthri*. This is in the same spirit as *Kāḻidhāsā*'s singing 'mē *sowbhāgya*' in reaction to *Ambāḻ's* action of letting the drop of nectar fall on *Bhavabhūthi*'s leaves, thus causing him to be defeated.

(Having been pleased after hearing *Šāsthri*'s hot reply), '*thasmai*' - to him; '*saparyām*' - the respects; '*vidhivath*' - according to the rules; '*sakāra*' - performed; '*bhavān*' - you; '*alankari-apišōdhitha*: *san*' - been impelled by Alankāri; '*mīnāmbikam*' - to *Mīnākshi*; '*ševithum*' - to worship; '*ājagāma*' - have come, haven't you?

Dīkshithar was the king's right hand man and the king listened to his words. However, in the same city where he had earned such respect, he approached and honored *Sāsthri* with all humility, whom he had just made fun of and treated with great disregard as a mere stranger even when *Šāsthri* responded strongly in kind. *Dīkshithar* actually exchanged pleasantries with him!

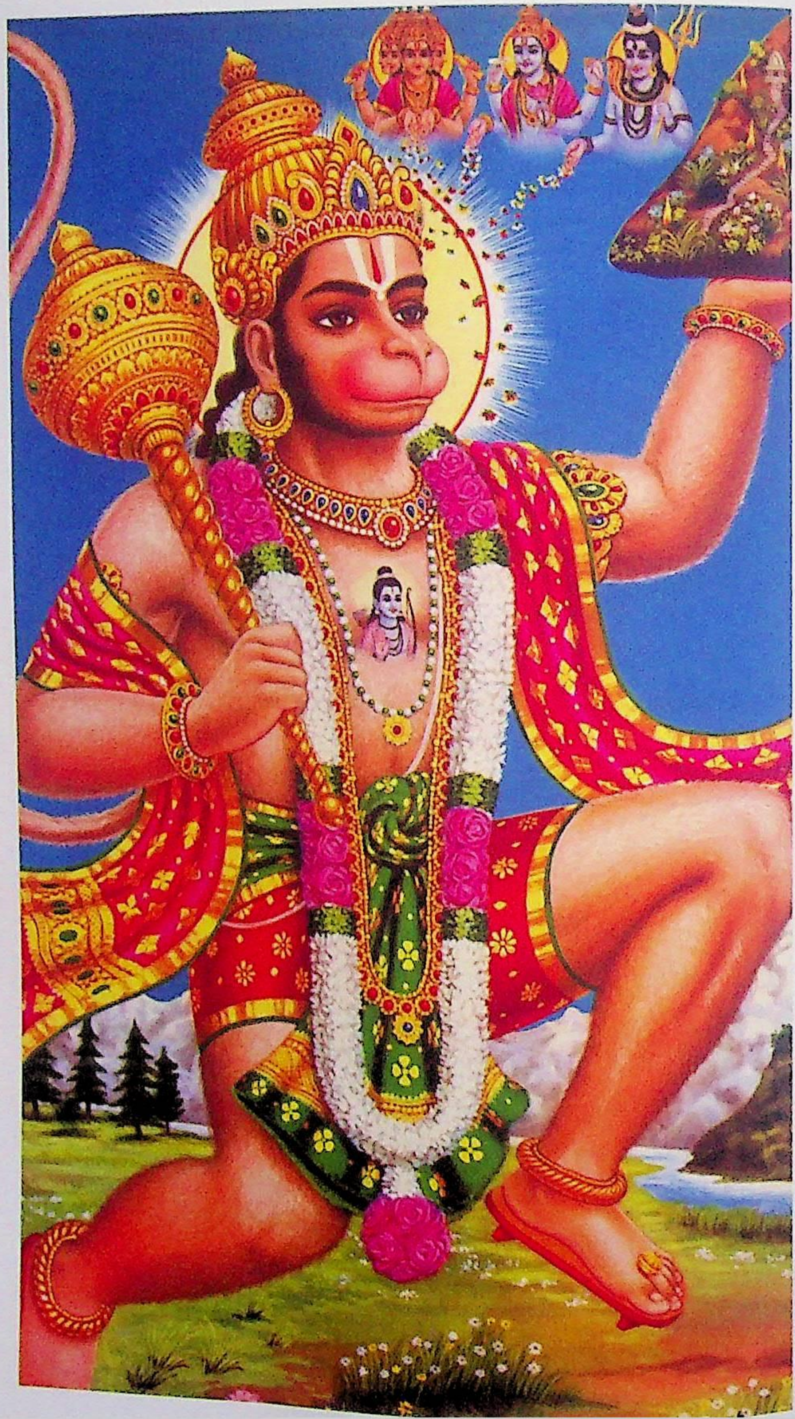
Thus, even when great intellectuals and kavis become bloated up with ahankāra, in the end they display even higher virtues and the entire episode ends up teaching us a lesson.

Even Distortion Gets Extolled

In *Šiva Mahimna Sthōthra*, Pushpa Dhanthar says, '*vikārō api slāgya*:' - He says, 'Even something that has lost its original form is worthy of appreciation.' He says this in the context of *Paramēswarā*'s drinking the poison, which got lodged in his throat. Looking at the poison that was showing through his absolutely white, conch-like neck, sparkling like sapphire, he said, 'Even a distortion (*vikāram*) is worthy of appreciation.' Similarly, even the ahankāra that these elders developed ultimately revealed their inner glory and became worthy of praise. '*vikārōpi slāgya*:'

* * *

MANGAḺĀRATHTHI



GREATNESS OF MARŪTHI

We often say ‘monkey mind’. The monkey is well known for its nature of constantly hopping from one thing to another. It is not able to stay on anything for more than a few seconds. This is the reason for not being under control. This is why, at times, when we, humans, display the same tendencies with a restless mind, we call it ‘monkey mind’.

‘hrudhaya - kapim athyantha chapalam’

Āchāryā himself says this. When praying to *Paramēswarā* he says in a light-hearted manner, ‘*Paramēswarā*! Tie up this very restless monkey-mind of mine with the leash of *bhakthi*. Hold this leash in your hand, take it along, and perform monkey shows to make a living. Instead of holding a skull and begging for alms, if you perform some show like this, you will earn a good living while *I*'ll be saved as well.’ During this witty prayer, he has used the word ‘*hridhaya kapi*’, that is, ‘monkey mind’.

The westerners also call it ‘monkey mind’. The monkey is the model for something that is constantly running here and there through the body, the mind, or both, completely unfettered.

Let’s take a cow or an elephant. It is no surprise if they do not eat meat and eat only vegetarian food. On the other hand, contrary to the well-known concept of ‘A tiger will not eat grass even when hungry,’ if a tiger turned vegetarian, that will of course be a big surprise!

Ānjanēya Swāmi’s astonishing greatness lies in this. Though he was a *kapi* (monkey) and a mighty one at that, which is known for its vacillation, he had completely controlled his mind with no trace of vacillation or temptation, controlled his senses and *indhriyās*, and controlled his body, dedicating it solely to the service of Rāmachandra Mūrthi. This is where his greatness lies.

There is another wonder in this. For achieving this control of the mind and the total control of the *indhriyās*, he didn't drop all his actions and go to some remote cave and sit down there for meditation. Those who retire to some remote place and sit down, to meditate, away from the association with the general society and the active world, could subdue their *indhriyās* and mind. *Ānjanēya* was not like that. He had accomplished it in this world of action, earning him the name of '*asādhya sādhaka*' (achiever of the impossible). He had achieved things such as leaping across the ocean, carrying a mountain, destroying a whole grove, burning up an entire city, etc.

He had a mind that didn't waver even slightly. He had anchored his mind squarely at the lotus feet of Sri Rama, absolutely still without straying away in any direction. But there is no one to match his level of active service that he did with his body. The mind was motionless in Rāma dhyāna and the body was running around at top speed, engaged in Rama-related tasks.

What is known to move at top speed?

They say *'vāyu vēgam, manō vēgam.'* (wind and mind)

Among the gross elements, wind moves the fastest. Among the subtle elements, nothing exceeds the speed of mind.

Arjuna complained, 'This mind seems to be flying like the wind! Just as the wind cannot be caught and controlled, the mind is also unable to be controlled.'

'chanchalam hi mana:krishna vāyōriva sadhushkaram'

(Gita 6-34)

Bhagawan also compares a *yōgi's* mind that has been stopped with absolute steadiness to a lamp whose flame glows steadily in a place with absolutely no wind.

'yathā dhīpo nivāthasthō nēngathē sopamā ...' (Gita 6-19)

'nivādham' means 'with no wind'. *'vātham'* means wind. *'vātham'* and 'vāyu' are one and the same. We speak of *'vātha rōham'*.

Who is *Ānjanēya Swāmy?*

He, who was born in the species of *kapi*, is also the son of Vāyu (Wind God), which constantly moves around. He is called Vāyu Kumara or *'Vāthāthmaja'*. '*Athmaja*' means 'son'. '*Vātha-Āthmaja*' means Vāyu's son.

'vāthāthmajam vānara - yūtha - mukhyam
srīrāmadhūtham śirasā namāmi'

'*yutham*' means 'crowd' or 'troop'. Since he was the chief of the troop of *vanara* (monkey), he is '*vānara - yūtha mukhya*'

This is the latter half of the *slōkā*. What is the first half? What does it say in that?

I mentioned two speeds: *vāyu vēgam* and *manō vēgam*. He is possessed with both of these speeds, but not with respect to the movement of the mind and the *indhriyās*. He has *vāyu vēgam* and *manō vēgam* only with respect to the actions that are carried out by his body.

'manōjavam māruthа thulya vēgam
jithēndhriyam buddhi mathām varishtam'

'*mano - javam*' - one who has the speed of the mind. '*javam*' means 'speed'.

'*mārutha - thulya vēgam*' - one who has the same speed as the wind. '*mārutham*' also means 'wind'. We say '*mandha mārutham*', don't we? Since he is the son of Marutham, he is called Māruthi. They sing *'Vīra Māruthi Gambīra Māruthi'* in *bhajans*.

He is '*manō java*' like the constantly vacillating mind; he is also '*mārutha thulya vēga*' like the wind that is constantly in motion. He is also the son of Vāyu - 'Vāthāthmaja'; in addition, he is the chief of the *kapis* who are known for their constantly changing nature - '*vānara yūtha mukhya*'.

The fantastic greatness about such a person as he, is that he is also worthy of being worshipped as,

'jithēndhriyam buddhi mathām varishtam'

He has conquered the senses. '*Jithendhriya*' - '*jitha indhriya*' - 'one who has the *indhriyās* that are conquered'. The mind is the root of all the actions that the *indhriyās* perform. Therefore, the one who conquers it is called *Jithēndhriya*. He is a *jithēndhriya* who had conquered the extremely vacillating mind.

That is why he has become the greatest of all *buddhimāns* (intellectuals) called '*buddhimathām varishta*'. *Buddhi* anchors the mind steady in good things. Therefore, *Ānjanēya Swāmy* who is *jithēndhriya* and has stopped the mind is '*buddhimathām varishta*'.

Saying just '*buddhiman*' is big enough. Even higher than that is '*buddhimathām vara*'. It would mean 'best among *buddhimāns*'. Even higher is '*buddhimathām variya*'. When comparing two people who are great, the one who ranks higher is called '*variya*'. Even this level wouldn't be sufficient to express the greatness of *Ānjanēya*. Going even higher, to indicate that there is nothing higher than this whatsoever, that there is no room for any comparison with him, that he is the superlative for *buddhi*, and that he should be placed at the very top of all *buddhimān*, the *slōkā* says '*buddhimathām varishta*'. '*varishta*' denotes the pinnacle of all glories. Nothing is above it, nor is there anything even comparable to it.

Even among *jnānis*, they sequence them as '*brahma vidh*', '*brahma vidhvara*', '*brahma vidhvariya*', and '*brahma vidhvarishta*'. Maruthi is '*buddhimathām varishta*'.

However, a greatness that is even loftier than all these conquest of *indhriya*, exalted *buddhi*, etc. is indeed his first place among the *bhakthās* of Sri Rama, conferred on him as he has earned the recognition that no one has served Sri Rama as he has in his capacity as Rāmadhāsa. He is the 'varishta' of *bhakthimāns* just as much as the *buddhimāns*. In addition to the physical strength, intellectual subtleties are also very essential for some one who goes as an envoy. Since he carried out this assignment superbly and instilled hope and cheer, removing the sorrow of Sita and Rama, we must bow to him primarily for this. We prostrate to him saying, *'Srī Rāma dhūtham śirasā namāmi'*.

'manōjavam mārutha - thulya - vēgam
jithēndhriyam buddhimathām varishtam |
vāthāthmajam vānara - yūtha - mukhyam
Srī Rāmadhūtham śirasā namāmi ||'

Mangaḻam

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